
00044914

BOMBAY BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 13 February, 2016



Sardinian Farmer taking Wild Boar to Market.

REMINISCENCES OF AN OLD SPORTSMAN

44914 a~

COLONEL J. P. HAMILTON, K.H.

AUTHOR OF 'TRAVELS IN THE INTERIOR OF COLUMBIA'

In Two Volumes

VOL. I.

NNA. C. 7

LONDON

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

1860

The right of translation is reserved

42 7.17
.44914

00044914

PREFACE.

"Since loss of sight and age refuse
Sports I indulged in heretofore;
Then, memory, oft with thee I muse
On days that *must* return no more."

HAVING unfortunately been blind for upwards of twenty years, it is natural to conclude that I have experienced many hours of *ennui*, notwithstanding the kind attentions of relatives and friends.

During those periods my mind has reverted to the past scenes of my life, and, having pursued field sports with ardour for upwards of forty years in various parts of Europe and South America, I determined to seek a solace by dictating my reminiscences and experience on the above subjects, which I hope may prove interesting to the reader, and instructive to the young sportsman.

The reader will perceive that as one of the old school, I am no advocate for slaughtering game

by wholesale, as is the modern practice of battues, where, as we learn from "The Field," and other newspapers, that a thousand, or even fifteen hundred head of game, are killed in a day. This, it appears to me, is very tame work compared to the healthy and invigorating exercise of fagging for your game, and observing the manœuvres of your well-trained setters, pointers, and spaniels, which in this country have attained perfection with regard to breed.

On those subjects which I cannot altogether treat from experience, such as falconry, hawking, and deer stalking, I have consulted several old works, more especially Blome, who wrote in the latter end of the seventeenth century, and also standard modern works. I am likewise indebted for much useful information and anecdote to some of my sporting friends, amongst whom I may class General Shaw Kennedy, who practised hawking in Ayrshire, many years ago, when a considerable part of that county was unenclosed.

I entertain a hope that the account of my field sports in the Island of Sardinia may be interesting to sportsmen, as I had a most favourable opportunity of enjoying this recreation in various parts

of the island with my friend, the Honourable W. Hill, then British Minister at the Court of Sardinia. As far as I have been able to ascertain, little or no account has been published of the field sports in that island; and, during the period I resided there, I gained also some information respecting the manners and customs of its inhabitants, which I have communicated to the reader.

It would afford me much satisfaction if the amusement of falconry or hawking were more extensively pursued. Although much of the United Kingdom has been enclosed within the last century, there are still many open parts where the sportsman may follow this exciting amusement successfully, without much risk or danger,—an amusement to which our ancestors devoted themselves, for several centuries, with enthusiastic ardour. I look upon Freeman and Salvin's work on "Falconry," recently published, as an indication that this noble sport is likely to be revived.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

Page

Feudal System of Barbarous Nations.—Severity of Norman Game Laws. — Louis XI. of France 1

CHAP. II.

Partridge Shooting. — Directions for Partridge Shooting. — Shooting in Buckinghamshire. — How to Destroy Cock Birds. — Affection of the Partridge 9

CHAP. III.

Difficulty respecting Scent.—Refreshment Recommended.—Mountain Partridge. — Attention to Farmers 22

CHAP. IV.

Sportsman of the Old School. — Celebrated Men of Norfolk . . 32

CHAP. V.

Red-legged Partridge. — Siege of St. Philippe. — Civil Growl of an Old Sportsman 42

CHAP. VI.

Pheasant Shooting. — Ordeal for Young Sportsmen. — Shooting in Cambridgeshire and Windsor. — Camp on Bagshot Heath. — The Poet Bowles. — Battues at Col. Adeane's. — Battue at General Bulwer's. — Gold Pheasants at Blenheim . . . 51

CHAP. VII.

Page
Grouse Shooting. — Disease in Grouse. — Man of Ross. — Carmarthenshire Shooting 84

CHAP. VIII.

The Ptarmigan. — Where Found. — Period of Breeding. — Taken by Greenlanders. — Description of Ptarmigan 104

CHAP. IX.

The Black Grouse. — My First Shot at a Black Cock. — Habits of the Birds 108

CHAP. X.

Capercailzie. — Description of Capercailzie. — Male Bird easily Approached in the Pairing Season. — One Seen by Author in Germany 113

CHAP. XI.

The Hare. — Form of Eyes and Ears well Placed for its Protection. — Fascinated when Pursued by Stoat or Weasel. — Weight of Hares. — Hares very Prolific. — Enemies of Hare. — Curious Old French Recipe for Dressing a Hare 118

CHAP. XII.

Rabbits. — Dog Tax in Ireland. — Breeding of Rabbits. — Worm in Rabbit. — Injury to Farmers. — Farming in Cambridgeshire 126

CHAP. XIII.

Woodcock Shooting in Ireland, Wales, and the Island of Terceira. — Description and Habits of the Woodcock. — Breed in England 140

CHAP. XIV.

Snipe Shooting in Canada and India. — Snipes in Various Parts of the Globe. — The Cambridge Fens. — Solitary Snipe. — Snipe Shooting by Mr. Sturt 155

CHAP. XV.

Page
Quail Shooting. — Quails in Malta, Sicily, and Russia. — Landrail or Corncrake. — Anecdote of French Abbé 166

CHAP. XVI.

The Bustard: Its Habits. — A Frenchman's Anecdote. — The Bustard in Morocco, the Island of Sardinia, and Canada . . 176

CHAP. XVII.

The Ortolan: Abundant in Holland: Subject to Apoplexy from Over Fatness. — Smollett's Method of Dressing them. — Adventure in Holland. — Severity of Dutch Criminal Laws. — Sir David Dundas. — Threatened Arrest. — Dispatches to Dutch Army. — Fortunate Promotion 183

CHAP. XVIII.

Flight of Wild Swans. — Wild Swan Shooting. — St. John's Wild Swan Shooting. — Mode of Dressing the Swan. — Author Shooting a Wild Swan 194

CHAP. XIX.

The Bittern. — Breeding of the Bittern. — Wild Geese. — The Flight of Wild Geese. — Brent Geese 206

CHAP. XX.

The Wild Duck: Its Habits. — Decoy for Wild Duck. — Tricks of Decoy Men. — Teal. — Widgeon. — Ruffs and Reeves. — Lapwing. — Wheatears 215

CHAP. XXI.

The Knot. — The Godwit. — The Golden Plover. — The Dottrell. — The Curlew 241

CHAP. XXII.

The Magpie. — The Carrion Crow. — The Jay 253

CHAP. XXIII.

Page
The Raven. — Nest Built in Oak. — Its Habits. — Mentioned in Scripture 257

CHAP. XXIV.

The Owl. — Superstition. — His Prey 260

CHAP. XXV.

The Eagle. — Roman and Persian Standards. — Golden Eagle. — Tawny Eagle. — Danger in Taking Eaglets. — Capture of an Eagle. — The Eagle a Glutton. — Anecdote 263

CHAP. XXVI.

The Fox. — His Manœuvres. — "The Biter Bit." — Always the Same. — His greatest Foe 272

CHAP. XXVII.

The Otter. — His Habits. — His Teachableness 278

CHAP. XXVIII.

The Stoat or Ermine. — Perseverance of Stoat after its Prey. — Destruction of Game by Stoats. — The Weasel: its Ferocity. — Fond of Eggs and Young Birds 281

CHAP. XXIX.

The Badger. — The Polecat. — The Marten 289

ILLUSTRATIONS IN VOL. I.

Sardinian Farmer . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Jessy, an excellent Sporting Dog . . . . *to face page* 12

Snipe Shooting . . . . . „ 155

REMINISCENCES OF A SPORTSMAN

REMINISCENCES OF A SPORTSMAN.

CHAPTER I.

FEUDAL SYSTEM OF BARBAROUS NATIONS.—SEVERITY OF NORMAN GAME LAWS.—LOUIS XI. OF FRANCE.

"The first physicians by debauch were made,
Excess began, and sloth sustains the trade,
By chase our long-lived fathers earned their food,
Toil strung the nerves and purified the blood.
But we, their sons, a pampered race of men,
Are dwindled down to threescore years and ten;
Better to hunt in fields for health unbought,
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.
The wise, for cure, on exercise depend;
God never made his work for men to mend."—DRYDEN.

FROM the earliest ages we find that the chase and field recreations have been pursued with eagerness and pleasure by the human race.

Formerly, it was considered that the right of pursu-

ing, taking, and destroying birds and animals that came under the denomination of *ferœ naturæ*, was vested in the king alone, and from him derived to such of his subjects as had received the grants of a chase, a park, or a free warren. These grants are of little avail in modern times, as no person is allowed by common law to trespass on the landed property of another, and should he repeat the offence, after being warned off, he is liable to an action at law. This applies to persons who are not pursuing game, but any one trespassing with a dog and gun, may, by the present game laws, be summoned to appear before a magistrate and fined.

It is not until the irruption of the barbarous nations into the Roman Empire, that we read of any other prohibitions, which led to the preservation of game, excepting that natural one of not sporting on any private grounds without the proprietor's permission. It will be found that all forest and game laws were introduced into Europe at the same time, and by the same policy that gave birth to the feudal system; when swarms of barbarians issued from the north, sweeping like an avalanche all resistance opposed to them, and laid the foundation of most of the present kingdoms of Europe on the ruins of the Western Empire. When one of these barbarian generals had to make arrangements for the distribution of the vanquished country to his followers, his most important object would be to keep all the natives of the country, who were not his military tenants, in almost abject slavery, and especially to prohibit them the use of arms by a severe law. Nothing could do this more effectually than the prohibition of hunting and sporting, and therefore it was the policy of the conqueror to reserve this right to himself, and grant

it only to his capital feudatories or greater barons; and accordingly we find in the feudal constitution one and the same law prohibiting the *rustici* or peasants from carrying arms, and also forbidding the use of nets, snares, or other engines for the destruction of game.

It is observed that in those nations where the feudal policy remains the most unaltered, the forest or game laws continue in their most severe rigour. In France, before the revolution, all game belonged properly to the king, and in some parts of Germany it was death for a peasant to be found hunting in the woods of the nobles. In Great Britain also hunting has ever been esteemed a most princely diversion and exercise. In the time of the ancient Britons the whole island abounded in game of various species. The people lived in a wild and pastoral manner, without enclosure or any improvement in their grounds, and derived their chief subsistence from the chase, which was enjoyed by everybody; but at the conquest of the island by the Saxons*, the art of agriculture was introduced, the land improved and enclosed, and the wild animals naturally took refuge in the forests and woods, and not having been disposed of in the first distribution of lands, were therefore held to belong to the Crown. These forests and woods were well stocked with game, which the royal sportsmen reserved for their own diversion, on pain of

* Hume mentions in his History of England that in the reign of the Saxon king Edgar the wolves in England were extirpated. He persevered in hunting these ravenous beasts, and on finding that those who escaped him had taken refuge in the mountains and forests of Wales he changed the tribute of money imposed on the Welsh princes into an annual payment of 300 heads of wolves, which produced such diligence in hunting them that they were no more seen in England or Wales.—Hume's *History of England.*

pecuniary forfeiture for trespassing therein in search of game; but every freeholder had the full right to sport on his own territory. However, on the conquest of England by William the Norman, more severe laws were enacted, and the right of pursuing and taking all beasts of chase or venery, and such other animals as were accounted game, was exclusively vested in the king, or in such persons only as were authorised by him. The right thus vested in the crown was executed with the utmost rigour at and after the period of the Norman establishment; not only in the ancient forests, but in the new, which the Conqueror made with an unscrupulous and devastating hand; for example, the New Forest in Hampshire, where the Norman tyrant resolved to make a forest for the chase, near Winchester, where he frequently resided. To accomplish this selfish object, the country was laid waste for upwards of thirty miles, churches and monasteries destroyed, and the unfortunate inhabitants driven from their homes, and their properties confiscated. Two of William's sons met with untimely deaths in this forest, and Richard his nephew, a natural son of Duke Robert, shared the same fate in this district. A general opinion prevailed among the clergy and the people that these disasters which befell William's family were a mark of the just vengeance of Heaven for his cruel and atrocious conduct.

New game laws were now enacted, by which William the Conqueror prohibited all his subjects, under severe penalties, from hunting in the royal forests. The killing of a stag, a wild boar, or a hare, was punished by putting out the eyes of the offender, whilst the punishment for committing murder might be evaded by paying a moderate fine or composition; and in pursuance

of the same tyrannic principle King John laid a total interdict upon the winged as well as the four-footed creation. "Capturam avium per totam Angliam interdixit." The cruel and insufferable hardships which the rigorous forest laws inflicted on the subject induced our ancestors* to be as zealous for their reformation as for the relaxation of the feudal rigours introduced by the Norman family. In consequence of this, we find that the immunities of Charta de Foresta, as warmly contended for, and extorted from the King with as much difficulty, as those of Magna Charta itself.*

By this charter, confirmed by King Henry the Third, many forests were stripped of their oppressive privileges and new regulations were made, especially that by which killing the king's deer was no longer a capital offence, but only to be punished by a fine, imprisonment, or banishment from the kingdom; and by a variety of statutes subsequently framed this is no longer a grievance to the subject. But no man, unless he who has a chase or free warren by grant from the crown; or prescription which supposes one, can be justified hunting or sporting upon another man's land, nor indeed, in thorough strictness of common law, can either hunt or shoot. In fact, most of the ancient feudal laws, as I have above stated regarding the right of sporting, may be now considered obsolete, for this good reason,

* We find in Warburton's "History of the Life of Prince Rupert," that King Charles I. and the prince followed the chase with enthusiasm; but to gratify this passion, he sacrificed the long sacred immunities of British property, by enclosing Richmond Park, with almost as little ceremony as the Norman Conqueror displayed in making the New Forest, for the greater convenience of having red as well as fallow deer near his residence.

that no one can delegate the right to sport on another person's land.*

Blackstone confirms what I have above stated, respecting the trespassing on another person's land. He says, "But it follows from the very end and constitution of society, that this natural right, as many others belonging to man, may be restrained by positive laws enacted for reasons of state, or for the supposed benefit of the community; and, in consequence of this authority, we find that the municipal laws of many nations have exerted such powers of restraint, as have, in general, forbidden the entering on another man's grounds, for any cause, without the owner's leave. There are substantial and good reasons for enacting these laws 1st.: For the encouragement of agriculture and improvement of lands, by giving every man an exclusive dominion over his own soil. 2nd. For the preservation of the several species of those animals which would soon be extirpated by a general liberty. 3rd. For prevention of idleness and dissipation among husbandmen, artificers, and others of lower rank, which would be the unavoidable consequence of universal licence." Puffendorff, on this subject, thus writes: "The law does not hereby take from any man his present property, or what was already his own, but barely abridges him of one means of acquiring a future

* I was lord of two manors in Cambridgeshire; in one of them I had eight hundred acres of freehold, and as the greater part of this parish was unenclosed I shot all over the open fields, and had very good partridge shooting. In the adjoining parish I possessed no landed property, receiving only small fines as lord of the manor from the copyholders, but in this parish were about forty acres of common, and although I had the right to shoot as lord of the manor, yet I never did, as the game was strictly preserved by the late Lord Maryborough, brother of the Duke of Wellington.

property, that of occupancy, which indeed the law of nature would allow him, but of which the laws of society have, in most instances, very justly and reasonably deprived him."

Louis XI. of France, who indulged in no pleasure but that of the chase, and who turned pale when the word *death* was mentioned, had the firmness to give orders himself for the mausoleum to be erected to him. He ordered that his statue should represent him placed on his knees in a hunting dress, and a hound by his side; that he should not be represented in the attenuated state to which his illness had reduced him, but as in his most robust health. If Sir Walter Scott's "Quentin Durward," give a true picture of Louis XI. we may certainly infer that he punished with immediate death any person found in his parks or forests destroying his deer or game. Louis XI. in the disguise of a merchant thus addresses Quentin Durward:—"Every yard of the ground, excepting the path which we now occupy, is rendered dangerous, and well nigh impracticable, by snares and traps, armed with scythe blades, which shred off the unwary passengers' limbs as sheerly as a hedge-bill tops a hawthorn sprig, and calthrops that would pierce your foot through, and pitfalls deep enough to bury you in for ever, for you are now within the precincts of the royal demesne." It is well known that at this period, and until the French Revolution broke out in 1789, the game laws in France, according to the feudal system, were as rigorous and severe as in any part of Europe.

"The abolition of the exclusive right of shooting and hunting," says Sir Archibald Alison, "was made the pretext for the most destructive disorders throughout all

France. An immense crowd of artisans and mechanics issued from the towns, and, joining the rural population, spread themselves on the fields, in search of game; the greatest violence was speedily committed by the armed and uncontrollable multitude. No sort of regard was paid to the clause in the decree of the National Assembly, that the right of the chase was given to each man on his own ground only; it was universally considered as conferring a general right to shoot on any ground whatever. Enclosures were struck down, woods destroyed, houses broken open, robberies perpetrated, under pretence of exercising the newly regained rights of man."

The abolition of the entail on landed property in France, and the equal division of personal and landed property among children, were the two most deadly blows aimed by the National Assembly against the aristocracy. It is calculated that at this time there are not less than six millions of landed proprietors in France, whose income derived from this source is not more than five or six hundred francs a year.

CHAP. II.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.—DIRECTIONS FOR PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.—SHOOTING IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.—HOW TO DESTROY COCK BIRDS.—AFFECTION OF THE PARTRIDGE.

"Nor on the surges of the boundless air,
Though borne triumphant, are they safe; the gun,
Glanced just, and sudden from the fowler's eye,
O'ertakes their sounding pinions; and again,
Immediate brings them from the towering wing,
Dead to the ground, or drives them wide dispersed,
Wounded and wheeling various down the wind."

THOMSON'S *Seasons.*

AFTER this brief notice of the origin of the game laws, I proceed to the business more immediately in hand.

What can be more enjoyable than partridge shooting, in a good breeding season, accompanied by an old sporting friend, a brace or a leash of steady dogs, and a man who marks well? In early life, like many young sportsmen, I passed in general a sleepless night on the 31st of August, and by five o'clock in the morning I was ready to take the field on nearly an empty stomach, for I had little inclination to eat or drink at that hour. What was in general the result of the early

campaign? Does it verify the old proverb, "that the early bird takes the worm?" By no means! Really you experience scarcely anything but disappointment and a light bag. Until nine or ten o'clock the ground is wet, the birds on the feed, consequently shy and wild, and the dogs, if they have not had previously sufficient work, unsteady. I strongly recommend to all young sportsmen not to commence their first day's partridge shooting till nine or ten o'clock; the ground is by that time dry and warm, the birds are off their feed and will then lie well to the dogs. The only sufficient reason for going out early in the morning is when you have some distant farms to shoot over, which are not preserved, and over which other sportsmen have a right to shoot.* In the few first days, it is an important object to be on your shooting ground before your rival sportsmen, especially if the farms should be situated a short distance from a town, from which they may sally forth early in the morning with dogs and gun. How worthless are many of the enjoyments of this life without an old friend to share them with you. But when birds are shy, and do not lie well, you may lose a few shots from talking, and

* Many years ago, I had leave to sport over a farm of Mr. L. W. Pole's, now Earl of Mornington. It consisted of seven or eight hundred acres of arable land on which there was good partridge shooting. I arrived at the house of the tenant about ten o'clock early in September. He received me in a friendly way, and assured me there were plenty of birds, and hoped I should have good sport. But alas! I beat patiently and closely with my pointers for several hours over the farm, and to my great annoyance found only a few straggling birds, and returned home with almost an empty game bag. I was too old a sportsman not to feel certain there had been some foul play, and afterwards ascertained that the tenant had two sporting friends staying with him from London, who had early that morning shot over the farm, and had either killed or driven away the birds.

not always paying the same attention to the working of the dogs. In fact, it is generally admitted, that most men in partridge shooting, succeed better when alone than in company.

"The social chat with cheerful friends
For want of sport may make amends;
The conversation I admire,
Is after dinner by the fire."

When alone there is nothing to excite or make you the least nervous, and when the birds rise you have a wider choice of single or double shots. In partridge shooting, as in all other field sports, you should beat your ground close, particularly the corners of fields, if it should be a windy day, as the birds are then apt to shelter themselves under the hedges; young sportsmen either from carelessness or idleness, sometimes omit doing this, and I have more than once, in consequence, had good shooting over a country, which had been beaten two or three hours before. I readily admit that much depends on the good or bad qualities of your dog in finding your game, and I was certainly very fortunate in breeding some excellent dogs, which I always broke in myself.* If they have good noses, plenty of work and being a good shot will mainly contribute to accomplish this object.

On entering a field, the sportsman should not stand idle at the gate, whilst the dogs are ranging over the

* I rarely allowed my gamekeepers to break in my pointers or setters. The error of these substitutes is a want of judgment in the punishment of the dogs, and Stonehenge says, "It is much easier to take the courage out of the very boldest animal, than to put it into a timid one;" but gamekeepers resemble some schoolmasters whose motto is "spare the rod and spoil the child."

field, but quarter it with them, and regulate their movements by the arm, and avoid as much as possible calling or whistling to them; for if birds have been much shot at, they often rise out of shot when they hear any unusual noise, and frequently in walking over the field, you start a hare or rise a bird within shot. When a dog makes a point, the other or others should immediately back him by holding up the hand; this is supposing that the dog or dogs do not see that which has the point. As soon as you have fired the dogs should come in as soon as you call out, "down charge."

If birds are scarce in a country, and you find a strong covey, persevere in following them up, and if you can manage to disperse the covey, you may calculate on getting some good shooting. Never fail to give your dogs the wind as much as possible. In September, the seed clover, potatoes, and cole seed, afford excellent cover for birds, and on a hot day they usually lie as close as stones; if you mark down a large covey of birds in one of these fields, and you have a brace or leash of pointers, I recommend your putting in couples all but your best and steadiest dog*, commence operations, and if you and your friend are good shots, four or five brace of birds will soon be in the game-bag. Farmers are sometimes so good natured as to let you follow a covey of birds into

* Half a century ago, the present Sir C. K., Bart., came to shoot with me in Norfolk; I had a liver-coloured pointer named Pluto, who had an excellent nose, and as steady as time. When we marked a covey in clover, potatoes, &c., Pluto alone accompanied us, and as we were both good shots, we frequently made sad havock amongst the poor partridges. Sir C. K. so highly appreciated the good qualities of Pluto, and was so anxious to have him, that before leaving he gave me fifty pounds for the dog.



Jessy, an excellent Sporting Dog, formerly the property of the Author.

their standing barley, and I have heard them say, that if you do not remain there too long, the damage is but trifling, as the crop is carefully gathered up after it has been mown. In standing barley and beans, the great difficulty is to make the birds rise, and if you only wing them, you run a great risk of losing them without a good retriever. The damage in walking through the latter crop with your dogs is more serious than the former, and I rarely obtained permission from the owner to follow the birds when thus sheltered in the standing beans. Some sportsmen are partial to shooting when the wind is very high; for myself, I had good reason for disliking such boisterous weather, for I found I never could shoot so well as when the weather was moderate, although the birds sometimes lie very close when it blows hard. When they rise and direct their course with the wind, like Paddy with a whisky bottle at his mouth, they never know when to stop. In such boisterous weather, I have remarked that the dogs are less steady, and not so readily under command. If you are shooting with a friend in a country much intersected with thick hedgerows, it is better to have a strong steady spaniel to flush the birds, the sportsmen being on each side of the hedge. If a bird is wounded, you stand a better chance of getting him with a spaniel than with a pointer. When birds are wild, and have been much shot at, I prefer shooting with a brace of well-trained spaniels that always hunt near you. The birds generally lie better to them, for when the pointer stands they usually rise immediately, and, if you do not happen to be near the dog, of course out of shot. To shoot in this way with spaniels, you must walk well, particularly if it should be a hilly country.

I know a gentleman, an excellent sportsman, who resides in a country of this description (Buckinghamshire), and when birds are wild, he goes out with two shooting parties, beating the high grounds on each side of the valleys. When the birds cross the valley, they are generally marked down by the opposite party, and *vice versâ*. By this manœuvring the birds become confused, scattered, and lie well; and the result has been, that five and twenty brace have been bagged at the latter end of October.* I should observe that the estate is strictly preserved, and the valleys generally rather narrow. I shot over this property about forty-five years ago, and at that time there was probably not on the whole estate more than thirty brace of birds in the middle of September; and as to pheasants you might as well expect to find an elephant: hares also were very scarce. On this same land, in November 1856, a party of six guns shot in four or five hours 160 head of game, a fair proportion of which were pheasants and hares.

An agreement should be made between two sportsmen that when a single bird gets up they should take it by turns to have the shot; if this is neglected, both may probably fire at the bird, each fancying that he has killed it; besides, if both hit the bird, it would be hardly

* In the year 1859 it appears almost ridiculous to mention twenty-five brace of birds being killed at the latter end of October; for the Duke of B. informed me that a party of seven or eight guns, either in Cambridgeshire or Norfolk killed in one day 2000 partridges! I cannot class this under the head of the old sport of partridge shooting. The coveys are all driven into a few very extensive turnip fields; the birds are then walked up, each sportsman having a man behind him with a second gun, which is handed to him as soon as he has discharged his two barrels. A good retriever generally accompanies these slaughterers, and frequently three or four beaters.

fit for the table. Should the person who fires first miss the bird, and it is still within shot, then the other takes his chance; if he kills, it is rather a mortifying circumstance to his companion, and in the vulgar phrase of sportsmen is termed "wiping a man's nose." In cross shots, either at birds, hares, or rabbits, you should take aim a little before them, but this should be calculated according to the distance of the object, and their speed in flying or running.

The great fault of young sportsmen is shooting under their birds; to obviate this Joe Manton, many years ago, made his guns with elevated sights.* In taking aim at an object, either flying or running, it is of essential consequence to keep the arm in constant motion; although this may not be acquired when you first begin to shoot, after a few months' practice you will be sure to move the arm spontaneously, and very likely become a first rate shot; this is a *sine quâ non.*

Should you be shooting in a champaign country, and have not a marker with you, one very essential point is to observe the spot where the covey alights; therefore, when you have killed your bird, you should not run to pick it up, or employ yourself in making the dogs bring it, but keep your eye fixed on the covey until you see them flap their wings and settle, or as far as your sight can extend. If you should be unable to ascertain the exact spot where they have alighted, yet you may have

* I had one of these guns given me by my old friend and schoolfellow, Sir C. K. It was the perfection of a gun, and the click of the lock was truly musical.

I believe, during the last century, double barrelled guns came first into use. The old sportsman generally took a slow but sure aim, satisfied with killing one bird, his maxim being *Sat est, si sat bene.*

a tolerably good guess where they are to be found, more especially if there should be any turnips, cole-seed, or rough furzy ground, in that direction. A good marker contributes greatly to the success of the day's sport, and I have known several ladies, who, after some practice, performed this as well as a gamekeeper.* If two or three persons are shooting together, and a covey disperse on rising, each should keep his eye steadily on the birds which fly to the right or left, or in a straight line, and, if the marking down is well performed, some good shooting may be anticipated, for, as I before said, when birds are dispersed, they lie generally close.

When a covey has sometimes risen forty or fifty yards off, I have fired both barrels at them, in the hope of making them disperse; this sometimes succeeds.

In Norfolk and Suffolk, where partridges are very numerous, they frequently begin to pack early in November, and in the neighbourhood of Swaffham I have seen forty or fifty birds rise together in a field; you have then no chance of getting within shot of them, as they are wild as hawks. Should you be much in want of birds, and able to guess where to find them, load each barrel with Eley's cartridges No. 4 shot, and conceal yourself under the hedge of the field, in which you expect to find the pack; then let a person enter the ground, walking in the direction where you lie concealed; you will then stand a fair chance, as they cross

* My wife was very *au fait* in marking down birds. As several hundred acres of the parish in which we lived were unenclosed, she frequently accompanied me shooting, on a New Forest pony, and when the birds were on the wing and I had shot, she rode in the direction of their flight, and rarely failed to mark them down accurately. I frequently passed her the compliment of declaring she was as useful in the field as a pointer.

the hedge where you are, of saluting them with both barrels, and, if you have any luck, you may probably bag four or five birds, or perhaps more. A friend of mine, in Essex, who has a great many red-legged partridges on his property, adopts this manœuvre. He told me, that after the first fortnight in September he had little chance of getting any of these wild, tiresome, running birds, which drive away the grey partridges, and make your dogs unsteady into the bargain. In a covey of birds the cocks are always the most numerous; when they are full feathered the cock bird may easily be distinguished from the hen by the dark-red feathers in the shape of a horse-shoe on his breast. To avoid having too many male birds in the breeding season kill as many cocks as possible, for when the female is pursued by two or three male birds she is apt to drop her eggs in various places, as no nest has been made; she might as well have been an old barren bird. To avoid having too many cock birds, some gentlemen net the coveys with setters, and kill a proportion of them.

This was done many years ago by the late Duke of Kingston. I strongly recommend to a gentleman, who possesses a large landed estate in Ireland, with an excellent soil for game, to adopt this plan, as he complains that he has hitherto been unable to increase, excepting in a trifling degree, his stock of partridges. If, in addition to this, he had in his service, two or three active and vigilant gamekeepers, either from Norfolk or Scotland, who understand thoroughly how to destroy vermin, then I should be greatly surprised if he had not in two or three years his estate well stocked with partridges. The same precaution should be taken not

to have too many jack hares*, for when that is the case, the doe hares are sadly annoyed by them and often worried to death.

The female partridge sits about three weeks, and if the weather is favourable in the spring many are hatched the latter end of May and beginning of June, and flyers may be seen the beginning of July, but the extremes of wet or dry weather prove very injurious and destructive to the young birds at the time of incubation; much rain may drown or chill the eggs. From the wet the young birds get the cramp, chill, and frequently die; and if the heat is great, and the soil a stiff clay, many are lost in the wide cracks of the land.

When the eggs of a partridge nest happen to be destroyed, the birds sometimes lay again; if the eggs are hatched, these are the small birds called squeakers, which are found early in September. Good sportsmen give quarter to these second broods, but in October they are full grown, and then they need not be spared. If the winter should be very severe, they generally perish.

No bird displays more affection to its young than the partridge, and it is curious to observe the cunning manœuvres they have recourse to in order to draw off the danger from their brood. When a person or a dog

* A long time since I was on a visit to Baroness Wenman, at Thame Park, in the month of March: walking about the grounds one morning, I met the head gamekeeper, with his gun and a hare in his hand, who told me that he was shooting jack hares, as they were too numerous, and worried the does; he afterwards showed me three or four which he had shot. He also informed me that he knew the jack hares when they got up, by their being smaller and their heads of a different shape. This man had a sharp keen eye thus to be able to distinguish the male from the female, which I am quite certain I never could have done.

approaches near them, the cock bird will rise, giving a peculiar plaintive cry to warn his family of the impending danger. He will not fly more than three or four yards, when he alights, running along the ground, with his wings expanded, and displaying every symptom of distress, in the anxious hope of enticing the enemy from the young ones. The hen bird will sometimes rise and fly a short distance, returning swiftly to her young ones, and then make every exertion to lead them to some more secure spot.

I have often seen these affectionate manœuvres, and it is gratifying to see such strong attachment displayed by these birds to shield their young from danger. Should a hawk be hovering over the brood, previously to his making his swoop to carry off one or two of the young birds, the old birds have been seen to attack the bird of prey at the risk of their lives. When the husbandmen are reaping the harvest, and gleaners in many of the fields, it frequently happens you find few birds in these parts, although you are sure that some good coveys were bred on the farms, which had been recently seen by the tenants or gamekeeper.* If it is a hot day, the most likely places to find them will be on the fallows, where they enjoy dusting themselves, and also the meadows and artificial grasses where they

* In some counties where arable farming prevails and is skilfully performed, and the fields divided by stone walls, which is the case in some parts of Gloucestershire, the partridges are much puzzled where to make their nests, more especially when there are no plantations or small copses, furze, &c. When this occurs, the clover and artificial grasses must be resorted to by the birds for the above purpose; but should the mowing take place early in the season, many of the nests would certainly be destroyed.

lie cool. I have frequently found them on the waste land of retired lanes.

When you feel pretty sure that the coveys have not been netted, persevere in beating close every sort of ground, and by doing this, the chances are two to one that you will be at last well rewarded with some good shooting. Birds lie sometimes very close on the fallows, particularly if the ground is cloggy, which prevents their running; young plantations with long grass, and underwood of one or two years' growth, are often resorted to by the birds when they have been much shot at.*

If your estate should be sufficiently extensive, never beat the ground too often; give the birds a respite of two or three days, and you will then most likely find them lie well, and the reverse if shot at day after day. If a bird is hit hard, keep your eye steadfastly fixed on it, to see whether he towers in the air, and as it sometimes falls dead at a considerable distance, hasten to the spot to prevent the labourers picking it up, and concealing it, which is occasionally done.

If you are shooting in a country where birds are scarce, and you happen to find a strong covey, persevere in following them, and if you succeed in dispersing them you may insure some good sport and fill the game bag.

* Some sportsmen, when their minds are haunted with blue devils, fancy that in a few years there will be little or no partridge shooting in England, owing to the prevailing system of cutting the corn with scythes, leaving scarcely any stubble for cover, and in a short time the fields being ploughed for fresh crops. But it should be borne in mind that the cultivation of turnips and potatoes has increased considerably, to which the birds, when disturbed, are sure to resort, as also clover left for seed. As long as the Irish peasants come to England with their sickles to reap the corn, we may fairly calculate on having some rough stubbles for partridge shooting.

Should you be beating a hilly country, where there is not much cover for birds, and your valleys be low, with hedgerows, gorse, and other low cover, endeavour as much as possible to drive the birds in that direction. Here you may be certain the birds will lie well, and if you have a spaniel or retriever *tant mieux*. If you mark a covey down the top of a field with a steep slope, go up to them at once, for partridges do not like running down hill, but are fond of running up hill.

Much game has sometimes been destroyed, both pheasants and partridges, by farmers steeping their seed wheat in a solution of arsenic to prevent the smut. I understand that lime will answer the same purpose and do the birds no harm. I can speak feelingly about the above blight, as I had one field, containing forty acres of wheat completely destroyed by the smut; a very serious loss.

CHAP. III.

DIFFICULTY. RESPECTING SCENT.—REFRESHMENT RECOMMENDED.—MOUNTAIN PARTRIDGE.—ATTENTION TO FARMERS.

"Exulting till he finds their nobler sense,
Their disproportioned speed does recompense;
Then cursing his conspiring feet, whose scent
Betrays that safety which their swiftness lent."—DENHAM.

THE scent is a problem that the best and ablest sportsman has never been able to solve, however long he may have pursued field recreations. With a soft wind blowing from the south, a gentleman goes out with his hounds or gun, in the expectation of a good run or well-filled game bag, when to his surprise and great disappointment the scent is found to be bad; at other times when the wind is cold, and in an easterly quarter, and a slight frost during the night, by eleven or twelve o'clock, the scent being good, I have enjoyed a good run with fox-hounds. There is another question on which there has been much disputation amongst sportsmen, whether game when under the strong excitement of fear is able to withhold its scent. In the course of my shooting campaigns I have witnessed some curious

instances of this: "I have sometimes marked down the exact spot where a bird had alighted, more especially with the landrail and quail; but on going to the place with my dogs, no bird was to be found, nor would the dogs be able to make out any scent. It is possible the bird might have risen again without my perceiving it, when employed in getting over a hedge or attending to the dogs, if it had happened only once, but such a frequent occurrence is difficult to be accounted for. There can be no doubt that when pheasants and partridges are sitting on the nest, Providence, to protect them against vermin, has given them the power to withhold their scent. I have heard of more instances than one, where partridges have made their nests in hedgerows, close to footpaths, and remained undisturbed until they had hatched their brood, notwithstanding the path was frequented by persons who had dogs with them. To corroborate this, a curious incident is mentioned by Mr. St. John in his amusing sporting work, entitled, "Wild Sports of the Highlands." He says, "I knew this year of a partridge's nest, which was placed close to a narrow footpath near my house, and although not only my people, but all my dogs, were constantly passing within a foot and a half of the bird they never found her out, and she hatched her brood in safety." Daniel, in his "Rural Sports," mentions a remarkable instance, of a partridge making her nest on the top of an oak pollard, on a farm named Lion Hall in Essex; the nest was examined by a workman, before the bird sat close, who found sixteen eggs in it; they were all hatched, and the old bird contrived to bring the brood safe to the ground. What makes it more singular that the partridge should

have chosen this curious place for her nest, is, that a stile and a path were under the tree, which led to the discovery of the nest.*

The remarks on scent, made by a gentleman in the newspaper called "The Field," are very interesting; as it is evident he has taken great pains to elucidate this mysterious subject. On some points I agree with him; but on others I still think there remains much obscurity. He says that "the non-emission, and consequent non-diffusion, of scent from a bird, either in concealment under grass, heather, or rocks, or when sitting on eggs, arises not from volition, or from any controlling power over scent possessed by the bird, but from its peculiar position, and from its motionless state, these being adverse to the emission or diffusion of scent, except to a very small extent, and within a very circumscribed compass." I really cannot acquiesce in this opinion, for, from the experience of many years' shooting, I have found birds concealed in every variety of ground, when sometimes the scent was excellent, and consequently dogs found the game with great facility; and again, as I before observed, with the wind in a favourable quarter, the soil moist, and apparently everything in favour of a good scent, and a bird accurately marked down in a hedge, furze, or rough ground, to our great surprise, on arriving at the spot, no bird was to be found by the dogs.

* A farmer discovered a partridge sitting on its eggs in a grass field; the bird allowed him to pass his hand frequently down its back without moving or showing any fear, but if he offered to touch the eggs, the poor bird immediately pecked his hand. Several persons went to see the bird, and a friend of mine amongst others, who informed me of the circumstance.—JESSE.

How is this to be accounted for? Some sportsmen have supposed that sudden alarm or fright will empower animals and birds to withhold their scent; with the human race it has the contrary effect. Providence, in my opinion, as I before stated, has enabled game, when sitting on the nest, to withhold their scent against their enemies; and this I know to be the general opinion of gamekeepers, amongst whom you sometimes find very shrewd and intelligent men. I fully agree with what this gentleman says regarding vermin that has been trapped and is alive. The alarm occasioned by coming suddenly on them is productive of an odour not resembling in the least the otto of roses; even a house-cat when taken out of a trap diffuses a most disagreeable smell.

In August 1802, I was grouse-shooting in Carmarthenshire, having taken up my quarters at a small inn in at that time the obscure village of Lampeter. Finding the grouse sometimes very scarce in the hills in this district, I occasionally had recourse to snipe shooting, as those birds of passage remain during the spring and summer, and breed on some of the morasses on the heights. One of my dogs, whilst looking out for snipes, made a point with his nose almost in a tuft of long sedgy grass, and after waiting a little while expecting a snipe to rise, I approached the spot, to endeavour to find out what the dog was pointing, and concluded at last that it must be a mouse; but, on examining closely the high grass, I perceived, lying close on the ground, a young snipe, just pen-feathered, which I took up, and certainly he made a very droll appearance, with his bare round head, large eyes, and long bill. I merely mention

this to prove that a very young bird, in thick cover, and lying close to the ground in a quiescent state, emits a strong scent. Perhaps, after all that has been written on scent, there will be always controversial opinions on the subject.

During the first two or three weeks of September, the days being long and the heat frequently oppressive, I recommend that sportsmen should, about noon, renovate their strength and spirits with a good luncheon, and to be cautious at the same time not to indulge too freely in strong libations, which may have the bad effect of making the hand and eye unsteady in the afternoon shooting. The best beverage to quench the thirst is cold tea with a dash of old cognac in it. However, to prove that sometimes, when a person has shot badly, and become in consequence rather nervous, a few glasses of home brewed ale may brace up the nerves, and improve much the shooting, I will recount the following anecdote which occurred to me in my juvenile years:—

In 1806, I was brigade major to the late General Bulwer (father of the diplomatist and excellent author). The General wrote to me from Bath, the latter end of October in that year (I then resided at Billingford Hall, near North Elmham), to go to Heyden, his residence, to kill twenty brace of partridges, to send ten brace to him, and to keep the same number for myself. I gave notice to the head gamekeeper that I should be there about eleven o'clock. On meeting the keeper, I asked him whether he thought I could get twenty brace. He replied, "Yes, to be sure, sir, and ten brace more, if you shoot to-day as well as you usually do, as we have plenty of birds, and not much shot at." Whether from

a little anxiety to fulfil the General's commission, or from some other unaccountable cause, I shot so badly the first two or three hours, that the keeper looked surprised, and at last said, "If you don't get on better with your shooting, major, I begin to think I must assist you to get the twenty brace of birds." Just at this time, we came near a small neat public house, the sign "The good woman without a head," kept, if I recollect right, by Thomas Jenkins, "home brewed ale" written over the door. The keeper said to me, "Let us go in, Major, and have some bread and cheese, and try Master Jenkins's tap, which I know to be of the right sort." So in we went. Being rather out of spirits from having shot so badly, I indulged in a copious draught, which made me feel rather queer when I came into the open air, and I told the keeper that I felt quite certain that I should not be able to kill ten brace of birds, much less twenty. "Never fear, major, I always shoot better when I have had a pint or two of Master Jenkins's beer." The result was this, I killed my first seventeen shots, and bagged my twenty brace by four o'clock, the keeper calling out every now and then when my bird fell, "Well done Master Jenkins's ale!"—and the birds all around me were so plentiful, and my shooting so much improved, that I feel confident I could have bagged ten more brace by six o'clock P.M.

Sometimes very curious shots are made.

I was shooting in September 1825, with the late Rev. — Fisher, rector of Linton, Cambridgeshire; at the end of a lane was a stubble field, from which a large covey of birds rose within shot. I fired at a bird on the left (Mr. Fisher did not fire), and at that instant the

covey made a sharp turn in that direction, consequently my shot raked them, and down fell five birds, to the no small surprise of my friend and myself: he exclaimed "Hullo, Colonel, I believe you fancy you are at the battle of Waterloo." I confess I felt rather ashamed of this great slaughter *, supposing Mr. Fisher might think I had fired a broadside into the covey, doing which would be considered very unsportsmanlike. When I told him, I had really shot at a bird to the left, he said he had seen the sharp turn of the birds which had proved so fatal to them.

In the latter end of October, I was one day shooting near Dorchester, in Dorsetshire. Three birds rose and flew through the forked branch of a tree, I fired, killed two of them, and winged the third. A friend of mine shot a rabbit in a turnip field, and on going to pick it up, found he had also shot a hen pheasant which was on the spot.

I have heard that when birds are very wild and cannot be got at, a curious expedient has been tried, that of flying a paper kite in the shape of a bird of prey, which so terrifies the birds, as to make them lie like

* The following statement is a very extraordinary return of the great number of partridges killed in the month of January 1858, by Major General Hall, M.P. and a party of sixteen guns, on his estate at Weston-Colville, Cambridgeshire. On January 12th, 118; on January 13th, 297; on the 14th, 184; on the 15th, 284; total 953. I conclude that the coveys must have been driven over a considerable extent of country into large turnip fields, and perhaps into some low furze covers, and then walked up by the sportsmen and three or four beaters, the persons shooting having a servant behind them with a second gun, who is constantly employed in loading. Such slaughter will probably astonish the public, but I would not give one farthing for such shooting.

stones, and that poachers sometimes adopt this plan, when endeavouring to net partridges during the day. I can readily conceive this artifice might prove fatal to the covey.*

There has been recently much difference of opinion whether the mountain partridge is a distinct species from the common grey. It appears by a letter from a gentleman, signed "An Old Salmon Fisher," in the "Field" newspaper, that the *Perdix montana* or mountain partridge is classed by Latham as a distinct species and by Temminck as a variety. I have not read the works of these ornithologists, but I suppose that the authorities above quoted are sufficient proofs that the mountain partridge is a distinct species. I have never met with them, although I have shot partridges in various elevated countries; it is well known that climate and food will occasion some change in the plumage and size of the bird.

I particularly recommend gentlemen who preserve game not to be niggardly towards the farmers, whether their tenants or not. A liberal supply of game, a hare, and a brace of birds will make ample atonement for the peccadilloes you may have been guilty of in pursuing your game in their standing barley. If the farmer keeps greyhounds then give him a leash of birds. As coursing is his field amusement, he may habitually feel annoyed at your shooting hares, and it is not doing as you would be done by to destroy them on his farm.

* My grandson saw two gentlemen shooting in Huntingdonshire, and as the partridges were very wild, they employed a man to fly one of these paper kites in the shape of a hawk, which had the effect of making the birds lie well.

I strongly advise that every endeavour should be used to be on friendly terms with the farmers, whether they are your tenants, whether you rent the shooting, or whether you have the exclusive right from a relation or friend. This, I conceive, may be accomplished by displaying always a conciliatory manner towards them; and if they have wives and daughters by paying them occasional visits. Civility costs little, and generally gets compound interest.

Most farmers will assist to a *certain extent* a gentleman in the preservation of his game, provided he conducts himself as I have above stated; and if the game should be so abundant as to occasion serious damage to the crops he should be readily allowed a fair compensation, to be made by calling in some person who is a competent judge and fully able to estimate the loss.

The farmers have it certainly in their power to destroy much game during the breeding season. Their time being chiefly occupied in riding and walking over their farms, the probability is, therefore, that they must sometimes discover both pheasants' and partridges' nests, and when an ill feeling predominates in their minds against the gentleman who has the shooting, the eggs will most likely be destroyed, and perhaps his labourers encouraged to do the same. I feel very unwilling to say anything against this useful class of men, but I know from experience they are sometimes very vindictive.*

* Several foxes and some of Baron Rothschild's stag hounds were found poisoned, in the summer of 1856, on the farm of Mr. Bowden in Bucks. A farmer of the name of Bowden, brother of the above, was convicted before P. Dauncey, Esq. and E. W. Lowndes in a penalty of 11*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.* for poisoning with strychnine two sporting dogs belonging to his neigh-

If you have a gamekeeper, he should have positive orders to keep down the rabbits, a source of great annoyance to the farmers.

bour Mr. Thomas Yates. One of the dogs was opened, and in his stomach was found a hare's foot and intestine tied up, which were taken to Messrs. Denne and Newman, surgeons, of Windsor, who on analysing the same found they each contained a large quantity of strychnine. The latter was found dead in Mr. Bowden's orchard, who acknowledged to Mr. Thos. Yates that the dog was there and that he had kicked some leaves over him.

CHAP IV.

SPORTSMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL. — CELEBRATED MEN OF NORFOLK.

" Im Wald, und auf der Haide
Da such ich meine Freude,
Ich bin ein Jägermann;
Den Wald und Forst zu hegen,
Das Wildpret zu erlegen,
Das est, was mir gefällt." * — *German Song.*

PERHAPS the reader may derive some amusement from a notice of a keen and excellent old sportsman, whom I met with by chance in Norfolk, about the year 1804. Being at that time on half-pay as a major of hussars, my time was chiefly occupied in field sports and in the cultivation of a small farm in the parish of Billingford. One delightful morning, in the month of May, I was strolling along the banks of the river Wensom, which runs down to Norwich, listening to the sweet notes of the blackbird, thrush, and various other small

* " Through the woods and meadows bright,
There I take my sole delight,
An eager sportsman I;
To search the forest wild, to find
And hunt the roebuck and the hind,
There does my pleasure lie.

singing birds (the nightingale never comes so far eastward). Being at the latter end of May, nature was clothed in her most pleasing garb.

> "The flowers of the forest in spring time were gay,
> And youth heightened all the soft pleasures of May."

I had not proceeded far, when I perceived, at some distance, a person fishing, and as I kept a sharp look out to prevent poachers fishing this part of the river with nets, bow-nets, trimmers, or night-lines, I went to ascertain whether this disciple of Isaac Walton was a fair angler, for being myself partial to the rod and line, I never made any objection to a gentleman waging war against the finny tribe according to the rules laid down by him whom I justly consider the father of anglers.

On my near approach to the person I had seen at a distance, I found from his dress and appearance that he was an elderly gentleman, well equipped for wading into shallow water by wearing waterproof boots, which came up three or four inches above his knees. I entered into conversation with him, inquiring if he had been successful in trolling for trout. He replied he had not; upon which I recommended him to go a short distance above Billingford bridge, where there was a strong current, and below the bridge a large deep hole, on the banks of which grew alders and willows, amongst whose roots were the haunts of a few large trout, some of them weighing two or three pounds. He thanked me for pointing out the place, but said he knew it well, as he had fished in that river for several years, and had formerly caught some good sized trout there, and that they generally came out of the deep water to feed rather late in the evening, which I knew from experience to be the case. In trolling, he appeared to be very skilful;

his artificial bait, made by himself, scarcely the size of a minnow, was composed of brilliant colours, and called by him a "kill devil," on account of its attractive powers to ensnare the fish. Our conversation turned on the fishing in the various rivers in England, when he informed me that the Thames afforded him the greatest pleasure; that most years he spent a month on the banks of this river, for fly-fishing and trolling for trout, in the neighbourhood of Pangbourne, Reading, and lower down the river; and that he had sometimes the good luck to capture monarchs of the stream, that is, trout weighing eight or nine pounds, red as salmon, and a rival to that fish on the table. On further conversation with Mr. Girdlestone (for that he told me was his name) I found him very agreeable and particularly well-informed on all field sports. I was much struck with his countenance, which was weather beaten and deeply furrowed by old Time, and led me to the conclusion he was on the wrong side of sixty. His eyes were of a light blue, lively, intelligent, and with a peculiar cast in one of them, the nose aquiline and forehead prominent. Years had made considerable havoc in what were once probably flowing locks, and in its colour of grey and light brown the former predominated. He might be about five feet six or seven in height, square built, strong and muscular, and, as I found a few months afterwards, fully equal to the fatigue of walking six or seven hours shooting on a warm day in September.

I confess I am not a disciple of Lavater, whose Treatise on Physiognomy has for its object to make you believe that you are enabled to judge of the good and bad qualities of person's hearts from the features or general expression of their countenance. Now we have

decided proofs, and that very recently, that there are men whose features display rather mildness and are somewhat prepossessing, but whose atrocious crimes, for which they suffered the utmost rigour of the law, gave full proofs of the blackness and wickedness of their hearts.* Energy and determination of the mind, courage and calmness in danger, may, I think be well expressed by the eyes, and more especially by the formation of the mouth, but in these qualities infallibility is not always experienced. On leaving Mr. Girdlestone I invited him to take luncheon at our residence in the village of Billingford, distant about half a mile. In an hour or two he arrived, made a hearty luncheon, and relished much the ale, sound sherry, and old port. We parted on most friendly terms, and he invited me to pay him a visit in September, assuring me that he could give me some very good partridge shooting on his estate, which I readily promised to do. When September arrived I had almost forgotten Mr. Girdlestone's invitation, when one morning I received a letter reminding me of my promise to pay him a visit in the shooting season, and also stating that he had plenty of birds which had not been much shot at. The next morning I was off in my dog-cart, taking with me one of my best pointers, for I like to be independent when shooting with strange dogs; the only objection to this is, the

* Palmer, who was hung for poisoning his friend Cook, and there can be little doubt had previously poisoned his wife and his brother; Redanies, a soldier in the Foreign Legion, who murdered a young girl, his sweetheart, and her sister. It was remarked in the court, that there was no expression in the countenances of these men to indicate to a close observer of their features that they could be guilty of such great crimes.

dogs unknown to each other are apt to be jealous and rather unsteady.

I found Mr. Girdlestone's house pleasantly situated in a well cultivated part of the country, apparently of a light soil, favourable for the breeding of game *, distant about three miles from the small town of Holt, on the Norfolk coast. My welcome was most hearty; my host informed me that he was a bachelor, and a housekeeper had the management of his household affairs, the duties of which she performed much to his satisfaction. In these primitive times we sat down to dinner at five o'clock; everything was *très comme il faut*, an evident proof that the housekeeper was the right person in the right place. The wines and heavy wet were faultless. In the evening I was rather surprised, when my host proposed that she should join our party, make tea for us, and afterwards remain to play at dummy whist. A very pretty girl about five and twenty, very neatly dressed, made her appearance, and on our further acquaintance, I found lively, and that she was good humoured, and must have received a tolerably good education. We played at cards until ten o'clock, when I retired to my bed-room, and found all most comfortable, and congratulated myself on being in such snug quarters, with the prospect of a few days' excellent partridge shooting. The breakfast next morning would not have

* "The mellow autumn came, and with it came
The promised party to enjoy its sweets;
The corn is cut, the manor full of game,
The pointer ranges, and the sportsman beats
In russet jacket, — lynx-like is his aim,
Full grows his bag, and wonderful his feats.
Ah! nut-brown partridges, ah! brilliant pheasants,
And ah! ye poachers, — 'tis no sport for peasants."—*Don Juan.*

disgraced the table of a Scottish laird, and this concluded I was on the *qui vive* to commence the day's shooting. This, however, was delayed for a short time by the squire being occupied with agricultural business with his bailiff. When he made his appearance fully equipped for the field, I was not a little surprised to see him with a single barrelled gun, apparently the size of a soldier's firelock of that period, and the barrel at least a foot longer than those of my own gun, the bore as large as one for shooting wildfowl. On handling it, I found it not so heavy as I expected. The stock had been made by a London gunmaker, and the lock, which was particularly well finished, by the same. Mr. Girdlestone told me that the barrel came from Berlin, that he would say nothing of its merit, as he expected I should soon be an eye-witness of its performance. In the first field we came to the dogs pointed, a strong covey rose, I shot a bird, but my companion did not fire; on inquiring the reason, he said the birds were too near, and when they crossed over the hedge he lost sight of them. Shortly after a single bird rose at about thirty yards; I fired both barrels and missed; then the old squire coolly put up the great gun to his shoulder, and brought the bird down as dead as a stone. The distance from where we stood to where it fell must have been at least seventy yards. He gave me a triumphant look and said, "This is my system of partridge shooting; you have now had a specimen of what these German barrels can perform:" adding, "It is now several years since I have shot with your double barrelled popguns." During the few days I remained with my hospitable friend, he adhered to this practice of killing the birds at great distances, and rarely allowed them to escape, and evidently derived

much satisfaction in "wiping my nose," which often occurred. He walked as vigorously as a man of forty, and rivalled me in getting over the fences. The last day, in beating a small copse, we flushed a woodcock, which I shot.*

When I recall the events of those days, which are as fully impressed on my memory as if they had occurred only two or three years since, I feel much pleasure in declaring that I never shot with a more agreeable companion and better sportsman than Mr. Girdlestone. But alas! like almost all the sporting friends of my younger days, he must long since have paid the debt of nature.

"How many a girl I loved is dead, how many a man grown old!
And as the lesson strikes my head, my weary heart grows cold."

Mr. Girdlestone had been brought up to the bar, was an active magistrate, but was considered an eccentric character, living in a very retired way. The family of the Girdlestones had been long established in Norfolk. The magisterial room of my friend might be considered as the model of a sportsman's apartment. On the walls were wooden racks, containing double and single barrelled guns, amongst which might be seen two or three with long German barrels; in other parts rods for trolling and fly-fishing with all their appendages which were displayed on shelves; books containing artificial flies and baits for trolling, and curious old powder-horns. In the corners of the room, landing

* It rarely happens that woodcocks are found in this country so early as the month of September; perhaps this bird might not have migrated in the spring; I know a person who saw a woodcock sitting on her nest, in a wood in Oxfordshire, and the young were hatched.

nets, a small casting net with close meshes for catching bait, and fishing krails in the intermediate spaces. Some good engravings on sporting subjects completed the embellishment of the walls. On a table might also be seen a stuffed martin cat, and a variety of foreign birds. The Squire's library was not large, but displayed his predominant passion for field sports. I recollect taking a cursory view of some of the books, amongst which were Isaac Walton, "Instructions to Young Sportsmen how to Shoot Flying," "The Old English Forest Ranger," "The Exploits of Robin Hood and Little John in Sherwood Forest," and old ballads, amongst which was that of Chevy Chase, &c. some law books and works on agriculture. This sanctum sanctorum looked into a small but well arranged flower garden.

I took leave of Mr. Girdlestone with much regret, for I enjoyed my visit exceedingly. At the age of two or three and twenty, with vigorous health, everything is *couleur de rose*. We never met again, for soon afterwards I got a staff appointment in Ireland, and was employed on active service in the Mediterranean, Spain, and with the army in France, till the spring of 1814, when peace was ratified. The country between Mr. Girdlestone's house and the small town of Holt, distant about three miles, was generally a wild heath and uncultivated, but for seven or eight miles along the coast to the eastward, towards the small sea-bathing town of Cromer, the country is hilly, well wooded, and the most picturesque part of this county. The soil of Norfolk is mostly sandy and gravelly, and particularly salubrious, better adapted for the growing of barley than wheat.

Norfolk can boast of having given birth to many celebrated men, churchmen, statesmen, lawyers, military

and naval men—Matthew Parker, archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Robert Walpole, Sir Edward Coke, judge, founder of the Earl of Leicester's family, Sir John Fastolf*, a famous general, Marquis Townsend, brigadier-general in the army when General Wolfe was killed in the battle fought on the plains of Abraham near Quebec, and the immortal Nelson and his élève Sir William Hoste, K.C.B.† Though last of all, yet not least in fame as a military man, stands Major-General Windham, who so highly distinguished himself in the attack of the Redan, at the siege of Sebastopol. In the early part of this century I had the pleasure of being introduced to the veteran Lord Townsend at his residence, Rainham, in Norfolk, by a friend of mine. He was at that time a fine looking old soldier, about eighty years of age, and his address and manners were extremely courteous. There are few people now living who can say they have seen the companion in arms of the celebrated General Wolfe. Some most atrocious characters have also been natives

* Sir John Fastolffe obtained considerable reputation as a general in the 15th century. He served in Ireland under Sir Stephen Scrope, and on his death, 1408, married his widow, heiress of the Tibbot family, of whose rich estates in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire he consequently became possessed. He soon after obtained the honour of knighthood and order of the Garter. He was wounded at the battle of Agincourt. In 1429 he defeated 6000 French with only 1500 English, and brought relief to the army before Orleans. He was buried with his wife in the church of Oulton, near Lowestoft. A sacrilegious robbery was committed in this church, February 1857, in which the thieves carried off the brass effigies of this general and his wife, which, being large, were of considerable value. The male figure, represented in a standing attitude, clothed in armour, head uncovered, and in an attitude of prayer; the female shows the fashion of her time by her drapery and fantastic head-dress. The date of the brass of which the figures were made was stated to be about the year 1479.

† Sir Wm. Hoste was a particular friend of mine.

of this county—Thomas Paine, the infidel political writer, author of "The Rights of Man;" Rush, who shot Mr. Jermy and his son, wounded Mrs. Jermy and fired at the lady's maid, who fortunately escaped unhurt. Rush was hung at Norwich. Thurtell, who had been an officer in the militia, and was executed at Newgate for the murder of his friend Mr. Weare, was also a native of Norfolk.

Recently on the estate of the Duke of Portland, the Nottingham papers mention, a "great mortality prevails among the partridges, and hundreds have been found dead in all directions, without any reasonable or apparent cause. When dissected, there is something in the intestines similar to the tape worm; but the breed itself has not latterly been so numerous, supposed to arise from their breeding 'in and in.' In consequence, on many of the detached estates, as at Elksley and other places, the keepers are netting all they possibly can, in order that they may be set at liberty in the preserves around Welbeck, which we hope may stay the further progress of the mortality."

CHAP. V.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE.—SIEGE OF ST. PHILIPPE.—CIVIL GROWL OF AN OLD SPORTSMAN.

"Tho' tropic birds boast painted plume,
And no bright birds our groves illume,
A sweeter voice is theirs;
The red-legg'd partridge too must yield
To that of Britain's wood and field,
Though gayer vest he wears.
For *bon vivants* and sportsmen say
Superior far the British grey."—J. P.

THE red-leg partridge is wilder than the grey partridge; it is found in woods, rocks, and cornfields. They run faster than the common partridge, and very frequently change their ground; it is certainly a much finer bird in plumage than the grey one; it is harder to kill, and swift in its flight. The male is known by certain small protuberances which appear on each foot. The red-leg (*caccalis rubra*), called the French partridge, is well known in the eastern counties. The red-leg is not only a distinct species from the common partridge, but belongs to a separate genus. On the continent, besides that of which we are now speaking, a smaller species is found called the rufus-breasted partridge.

This partridge was introduced into Suffolk, by the late Marquis of Hertford: forty years ago, one of them was

shot in this county and it was regarded with as much curiosity as if a ptarmigan had been shot there. Its plumage is olive-green on the back, ashy-blue breast, rufus belly, white throat, set off by a black spotted necklace, and bright red legs and beak, which render it a most attractive looking bird; the fifth primary quill feather is the longest. The old cock is furnished with blunt spurs; the eggs, generally eight or nine in number, are each larger than those of the common species, and are very different in colour, closely resembling in that particular those of the guinea-fowl; they commence laying and hatch about the same time as the grey partridge; the nest is generally exposed, the top of a bank being a favourite nesting place. The flesh is white, but when roasted it is dry and flavourless compared with the English bird; served like a boiled fowl they are much more palatable. Though very wary, it can scarcely be called a shy bird, for it does not attempt, like the common partridge, to conceal itself.

Enter a field where there is a covey, and provided the cover is not too high you will see them set off running; walk after them, and they will continue to run, until you approach nearer than they consider safe, and over they pop, two or three at a time, into the next field, scattering in all directions; stand still, and you will hear them all directly begin calling, chuck-chuck-chuckar, chuck-chuck-chuckar, and if left alone, if ever so much dispersed, they will get together in a very short time. They avoid high cover, and if driven into it, will get up in all parts of a field immediately a gun is fired; or perhaps one or two birds will run down a furrow before you and get up against the hedge, just out of shot. They seem more partial to fallows and barley.

stubbles, and are particularly fond of pulse; indeed, all the birds in the neighbourhood will generally be found in a field newly sown with pea and tare. They are easily driven together, and I once had them so well managed that I bagged two brace at two shots.

Sportsmen in general dislike having the red-legged partridge on their estates*; for, from their great propensity for running, they are sure to spoil young dogs; therefore every means are taken to keep them down, or to get rid of them altogether; and to accomplish this they should be closely pursued after a fall of snow, when there are several inches of it on the ground; they then quite lose their self-possession, and immediately take to the hedges and lie very close. Fifteen brace have been known to be killed in one day by a pair of guns. They may sometimes be seen sitting on gates or walls, sunning themselves, but they are never known to perch on trees, like the American spruce-partridge. When they find themselves surrounded by horses and hounds they become so alarmed that you may knock some down with your hunting whip. They have the character of being very pugnacious, and driving the grey partridge from the fields they frequent. When there are several guns out, the best way is to enter a field at different points and press the birds towards the centre; some of them will lie or go off within shot to almost a certainty. A gentleman once saw an entire

* A friend of mine who had just returned from visiting a gentleman residing a few miles from Brandon in Norfolk, told me a few days ago that he complained much of the annoyance of the red-legged partridge, which had increased so much as to have nearly driven away from his estate the grey partridge, the former being so pugnacious; in consequence of this he had given orders to his gamekeepers to destroy their nests, and even to shoot them in the breeding season.

covey of nine birds shot in as many minutes by pursuing this plan in a field of mangold.

There are rarely more in a covey than from nine to twelve birds.

When I was shooting in the island of Sardinia, many years ago, in the months of November and December, I was able to kill sometimes five or six brace of the red-legged partridge, having the advantage of a variety of low covers where the birds would occasionally lie close, and in some parts of this island the red-legged partridges were numerous. In two respects the red-legged differs from the grey partridge. The former rarely or never flock together, whilst in the latter part of the season I have seen fifty brace get up in one field. They take the precaution to secure themselves from the sudden attacks of polecats, stoats, &c. by never remaining during the night in coverts, but nestle together in the midst of large fields far removed from hedges and coppices, where they delight to haunt during the day. So far back as the time of Charles the Second, several pairs of the red-legged partridge were turned out at Windsor to obtain a stock, but they are supposed to have mostly perished, although some of them or their descendants were seen for a few years afterwards. The late Duke of Northumberland was in hopes of their increasing on his estate; but the late Earl of Rochford and the Marquis of Hertford were at the most expense and trouble to establish them in this country.

Both these noblemen had not only numbers of the birds sent over from France, but also imported a vast number of their eggs, which were hatched under hens and set at liberty at a proper age; Mr. Daniel tells us, that "in 1777 he found within two miles of Colchester, a covey of fourteen; they were in a very thick piece of

turnips, and for half an hour baffled the exertions of a brace of good pointers to make them take wing, and the first that so immediately perched on the hedge was shot in that situation, without its being known what bird it was. A leash more was at length sprung from the turnips and shot, and two days after a brace more was killed by another person. From that time until November 1799 he never shot one. He was then out at Sudbourn, with a gentleman who was particularly anxious to kill some of the red-legged partridges, and hunted with a brace of capital pointers for them only. The instant the dog stood the red-legged birds ran, and always took wing at such distances as to be out of the range of the shot from any fowling-piece. Upon the same grounds and on the same day they lay until the springing spaniels almost touched them before they rose, and in a short time he killed two brace and a half."

They had one peculiarity, that when wounded they will go to ground in the rabbit burrows.

Whilst on the subject of red-legged partridges, I may mention a curious circumstance witnessed by me in the summer of 1813. I was sent, as second in command, by the late Colonel Prevost to receive the sword of the French colonel who commanded the fortress of St. Philippe, which surrendered to us after a seige of ten days. I afterwards walked with the French commandant about the place, and to my surprise I saw several large wooden cases, placed in a secure situation, filled with red-legged partridges, fattening for the colonel's table. But "there is many a slip between the cup and the lip," and I strongly suspect he never tasted one of them, as the officers and soldiers of the garrison were very soon sent off on board our transports as prisoners of war. This proved to me that had I been there a month later, I

should have had good sport with the red-legged partridges. When the colonel gave me his sword he appeared very dejected, and said, "*L'Empereur ne me pardonnera jamais.*" I inquired his reason, to which he replied that Napoleon had given a positive order that no place should be surrendered until it had stood one assault. But fortunately during the night one of our shells blew up the magazine, which left him no alternative but that of hoisting the white flag. I had been ordered by Colonel Prevost to take the command of the detachment that was to storm the breach at daylight and to say the truth, I was not sorry to see the white flag hoisted, as it saved an effusion of blood. A friend of mine, a general officer, at that time a captain 43rd light infantry, told me that after the capture of Badajos by the Duke of Wellington, the country being very open and corn lands, the officers amused themselves on sultry days, when there was little or no wind, in riding down the red-legged partridges, which, when tired, they wounded with their whips, and frequently captured several brace of them. This I can readily imagine, for when much alarmed they become stupefied.

The civil growl from an old sportsman in the "Field" newspaper I have found so amusing I cannot help inserting it:—

"Ay, ay, ay! It's all very well, your days of breech-loading and patent cartridges, machines for killing birds at a hundred yards off, and capable of firing off as much ammunition in an hour as a man can carry, so that ere long you will want three or four men to carry your powder and shot for you. But your guns, your breech-loaders, and all that, don't make a bit better target, as

you call it, if as good, as that old steel and flint Manton of my father; so you a'n't much advanced in that respect, for I doubt if your workmanship is one bit better, or that your gun shoots closer or harder than ours did, though in mechanism, I give in. To be sure, the flint and steel took a long time going off, particularly in wet weather, when it might not go off at all; and although the percussion was a great innovation, yet after all, it was beneficial, and the percussion upon trial answered; but I stop there. The percussion muzzle-loading double is my Rubicon. In all conscience, my dear boys, what can you want more? Can't you kill your twenty to twenty-five brace a day with it comfortably, and what d'ye want more? Ain't twenty-five brace a day enough for sport and satisfaction to any man who is a sportsman and isn't a butcher? Why, d—n it, sirs, here's Lord B. and Lords S. and W. killing their 160 and 190 brace a day! By the Lord Harry, sir, it is murder, sheer murder, and slavery likewise! Why a man might as well be a steam gun at once, as go hammering away from morning to night in this way; it's a mere pigeon match. What room either for walking, for dogs working and finding? for expectation, healthy excitement, or showing good sportsmanlike acquirements, when its nothing but kill! kill! kill! one continued bang! bang! bang! all day long as fast as you can fire? To my notion there's no sport in it, and it completely defeats the entire object and end of sport. Now, look you, I can understand the use of your breach-loading system, were your object to exterminate; and no doubt in military matters, when one man had as well be half a dozen men as not, and where there may occur moments where two or three shots may save his life, it's all very well; and for cavalry carbines too, of course, the

advantage of not being bothered with ramrods and all that's enormous. But, confound it, sir, you don't want to exterminate the partridge, do you? and if so, why not take and net 'em at once, and done with it In my days, we treated the partridges with gentlemanly and sportsmanlike consideration; we did not shoot at 'em over thirty yards, over which you sometimes kill, but more often wound and maim a feathered sufferer, which going away to some secret place pines and dies miserably. Partridges then got up at a deliberate and respectable distance from twelve to twenty yards rise, and we had ample time while the flint was going off, to pick our bird before he got out of distance. We never used to talk of seventy yards then, because we never shot at it. We kept our partridges for our sport, pleasure, and health, not simply for a morbid love of killing. Confound you! who would ever have thought that you would have brought that infernal, unsportsmanlike French gimcrack of a word 'battue,' to bear on our poor modest little partridge? But so it is, more 's the pity! Well, well; the country's going to the devil with all these new fangled notions; what between the butchers on the one side, and the snivelling tub-thumpers crying out against the game laws, and all that, on the other; what with the great 'I am,' the leading journal, as you call it (small credit in leading folks who have left off judging for themselves), sneering at, and running down every sport, from hunting to prize fighting, and wanting to reduce the nation to a parcel of cheating money grubbers, without one sentiment of fair-play or manliness, in order that it may be the sooner used up,—the country, I repeat, is going to the devil. Hang me such journals, I say, in my day had any such

ventured to attack fox-hunting, and its chief and honoured supporters, and pitched into those sort of sports, that make us the manly people we are, we'd have burnt it, sir, have burnt it along with the editor's effigy in every country town and market-place in the kingdom; aye, d—n me, we would, even if some twenty couples of stout hunting whips weren't anxiously seeking to make the acquaintance of the writer. And see what comes of your go-a-head progress, march of intellect, and the Lord knows what. Look at your dogs again; what's become of the steady, double-nosed Spanish pointer, who never made a mistake, eh? Why you've done away with him for a racing, tearing, galloping steam engine, who hardly makes anything else. Even where you pretend to preserve, as in everything else, you over do the thing. And what do you know of partridge shooting as a sport? what can you care about it when the birds are like flocks of rooks, not coveys. Is it worth your while to study the habits of this wily bird, when you have only to enter a field to find seven or eight coveys? Not a bit; and, look you, a partridge is a wily bird, and has more cleverness than you give him credit for, and many a time has an old hen carried her covey away from me, out of harm, in spite of all my experience. But what do you care about that? 'Let's find another covey,' that's your motto. Not mine though! . . .

"Well, well; I only know that what with your new-fangled notions of farming; and what with your grubbing up the hedgerows and spinneys, and your pot-hunters, and game sellers, battues, and breech-loaders, the country, I maintain, is losing its sportsmanlike ways, and going right away, sir, to the very devil."

CHAP. VI.

PHEASANT SHOOTING. — ORDEAL FOR YOUNG SPORTSMEN. — SHOOTING IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND WINDSOR. — CAMP ON BAGSHOT HEATH. — THE POET BOWLES. — BATTUES AT COL. ADEANE'S. — BATTUE AT GENERAL BULWER'S. — GOLD PHEASANTS AT BLENHEIM.

"Not so the pheasant on his charms presumes,
Though he, too, has a glory in his plumes;
He, Christian-like, retreats with modest mien,
To the close copse, or far sequestered green,
And shines without desiring to be seen." — COWPER.

WELCOME October! This I consider altogether the most agreeable month in the year for field sports. The rays of the sun are now moderated, and occasion less fatigue both to the sportsman and his dogs. You have also a greater variety of game, for as the partridge shooting is still very good, more particularly in the counties where turnips and cole seed are much cultivated, you find occasionally pheasants in these fields, and frequently in the hedge-rows. The days are still sufficiently long for a good day's sporting, and the weather warm enough to induce the game to lie well.

It is generally asserted that there are more fine days in this month than in any month in the year, and I believe it to be the case. Charles the Second said that

ours was the best climate in Europe, for that a gentleman might take exercise, either on horseback or on foot, any day in the year. This I cannot admit, for certainly this cannot be done without much discomfort, and on some occasions not without risk. Torrents of rain fall sometimes for twenty-four hours, and the gales of wind from the south-west so violent as nearly to blow a man off his horse, or even off his legs; and we know from accounts in the newspapers that travellers on foot in the north perish in snow-storms or sometimes in drifts of snow. These, I think, are sufficient proofs that King Charles looked with too favourable an eye on the climate of England.

The sleepless nights which I passed before the commencement of grouse and partridge shooting, I never experienced on the last day of September. A month or six weeks' previous shooting had to a certain extent cooled my sporting ardour, and both men and dogs go to their work with less excitement; independently of which, I think pheasant shooting is not thoroughly enjoyable before the middle of November, when the covers have been deprived of their foliage*, the brambles, briars, and long grass probably subdued by the frost, and walking less fatiguing for the sportsman in the low fells of three or four years' growth; although when the woods have been shot in for some time you must make up your mind to beat patiently the fells of ten or twelve years' growth, into which the game then takes refuge.

* "But see the fading many coloured woods.
Shade deepening over shade, the country round
Imbrown; a crowded umbrage, dark and dim,
Of every hue, from wan declining green
To sooty dark."—THOMSON.

To be sure, in these high fells, you have the annoyance of hearing the game rise and rarely getting a shot; but generally you are amply compensated for this penance, by getting some good shooting in the low cover. Sportsmen who are shy of undertaking this task will rarely make a good bag in large woods. This, I feel confident, all old sportsmen will admit. I do not include in this class your decided battue shooters.

In young plantations, particularly of larch, where the grass grows strong and high from being exposed to the sun and air, I have had good pheasant shooting in October, as the birds lie well there, also in thick hedgerows and willow beds; for the hedgerow shooting there should be two guns, a brace of strong steady spaniels, and a retriever. Pheasants are very fond of lying in willow beds and moist situations during the warmth of the day, for it is a bird that requires much water.* In the middle of the day in this month, the sportsman fully enjoys a glass of old October ale.

> "Nor wanting is the brown October drawn,
> Mature and perfect, from its dark retreat,
> Of thirty years, and now his honest front
> Flames in the light refulgent, not afraid
> Even with the vineyard's best produce to vie."
>
> THOMSON.

The pheasant, which is now found in most parts of the kingdom, was brought from the country through which the river Phasis takes its course, and from which it derives its name. This river pursues its rapid course from the Iberian Caucasus, the most lofty and craggy

* "The Bristol Times" states that a party of gentlemen, shooting on Mr. Ward's Manor of Fern Park, killed, in *one withy bed*, the extraordinary number of fifty-three brace of pheasants.

mountains of Asia, and falls into the Black Sea about 700 miles from Constantinople. Amongst our game birds we have none that can rival the cock pheasant for the beauty of his plumage and the elegance of his shape*, and when they have been hung a sufficient time in the larder† they are esteemed a great delicacy for the table. In my younger days, when pheasants were scarcer than they are at present, when one formed part of the second course, one or two of the tail feathers were fixed in the bird.

Since battue shooting has been so generally in fashion for the last six or seven years, pheasants may be found in abundance in most parts of England and in some counties of Scotland and Ireland. I believe it is not many years since pheasants were bred in the latter country: my reason for stating this is that I resided for two years in the south of Ireland, and shot much in the counties of Carlow, Waterford, and sometimes in Wexford and Wicklow, and I am quite certain I never once saw a pheasant. At the present time some of the covers in Ireland are well stocked with them, and we read in the newspapers of sixty or seventy being killed at one day's battue.

When you have decided on what part of your estate you intend to shoot, on the 1st of October (usually the

* "Ah! what avails his glossy varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet circled eyes;
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold."
POPE'S *Windsor Forest.*

† A friend of mine would never send a present of game, until he had kept it the proper time for dressing, that justice might be done to it. If he was alive what would he have thought of what I heard a lady say to her gamekeeper, "Go out and shoot a pheasant for dinner to-day!"

outskirts), make your reconnaissance quietly over the corn fields, without a dog, about four o'clock in the afternoon, when you may be almost sure of seeing the pheasants feeding. If the adjacent woods have full grown oak trees, and the season for acorns be good, you may then fairly calculate that some pheasants are still in the wood to feed on the acorns, which are a favourite food of these birds. Should you have a wood in your neighbourhood, part of which belongs to you, and the remainder to other proprietors, if you should not have obtained the exclusive right of shooting in it, and the cover being the property of several individuals, and therefore difficult to preserve, then I recommend you should be at the wood with pointers or spaniels (the latter if the underwood is strong) at six o'clock in the morning; and although at the end of the last season it was cleared of game, if corn fields are adjacent to it, two or three guns will most likely bag four or five brace of pheasants and some hares and rabbits.

On the 1st of October, if you know of one or two nides of pheasants being bred on the outskirts of your estate, or on neutral ground, you should of course take the field early in the morning for the attack of the young birds. We find in "The Spectator," that the favourite character of Addison, Sir Roger de Coverley*, adopted the system of going "Some distance from his

* When covers have been well beat in every part, it is advisable to do the same on the outside, and if there should be any thick hedgerows, small patches of furze or brakes, these also should be closely beaten, as the pheasants, particularly cocks, frequently leave the wood to take shelter there. Nothing is more detrimental to pheasant shooting, than wild spaniels that chase hares and rabbits, as they drive the pheasants away.

house, and gets into the frontiers of his estate before he beats about in search of a hare or partridge, on purpose to spare his own fields, where he is always sure of finding diversion. For this reason, the country gentleman, like the fox, seldom preys near his own house."

A connection of mine has a wood within two or three miles of him, of about fifty acres, a divided property; by his adopting the above plan, I have had, some years ago, on the 1st of October, a good day's pheasant shooting, according to my taste as a sportsman of the old school, for what we bagged was acquired by fagging hard, and contending with brambles, briars, and other strong impediments, which are found at this season to impede your walking. When the plantations are young and the country intersected with large turnip fields, as in Norfolk and Suffolk, I give the preference to pheasant shooting with pointers; and to recover wounded birds, as they run with much speed, it is desirable to have a steady retriever in a slip. The late Colonel Gillon, of the Greys, an old friend of mine, when pheasant shooting in cover, had generally a leash of pointers, with small bells attached to their collars, in order to ascertain where they were, and when a dog was making a point. This answered well in October, for then many of the pheasants being young birds lie well, but later in the season, when they are on the *qui vive*, or ready to make use of their legs at the least alarm, the tinkling of the bell makes them run, and when they rise are mostly out of shot.

Colonel Gillon* was a first rate sportsman of the old

* Thirty years ago he died at Wallhouse, his residence about twenty miles from Edinburgh, where he had an estate of 2000*l.* per annum. His late son inherited a very large property in England.

school, an excellent shot, indefatigable, no day too long for him, and no cover too strong. He might boast of having as steady dogs as any in the kingdom, for they were well kept, had plenty of work, and abundance of game killed to them. This gentleman had what he called his October grouse gun, with which I have heard him say he could kill them at forty or fifty yards.

The ordeal that I should like a young sportsman to undergo, to prove whether he was likely to turn out a persevering and zealous sportsman of the old school in cover shooting, would be this. There are in Oxfordshire a chain of covers of about one thousand acres, known by the name of the Quarters. They consist of three large woods, two of these between three and four hundred acres *, separated by a few fields of cultivated land. The soil of these woods is a stiff clay, in some parts of a very moist nature; and to effect the drainage for the benefit of the trees and underwood, rather deep and wide open drains have been cut in various directions, mostly covered with long grass, until a sharp frost destroys the herbage, and exposes them in some degree to the view of the sportsman, who has also to contend with a phalanx of blackthorn, bramble, briar, thick underwood, and in some parts long sedgy grass. The underwood consists of fells of different ages, from one to twelve years' growth. The trees are almost all oak, and generally rather stunted. These woods † belong to a connec-

* It was in one of these woods, called Waterperry, that one of the woodmen came in the spring to announce to the family, that he had seen a woodcock sitting on its nest in the low cover. My sister-in-law went with him to the wood, and approached cautiously to the spot; she told me she had plainly seen the brilliant black eyes of the bird; she was sitting close, and the young ones were hatched a few days afterwards.

† In these woods some years ago, the martin cat was occasionally shot

tion of mine, who, being more partial to fox-hunting than shooting, preserves with care the foxes, and feels rather indifferent about the preservation of the game. The result to the sportsman's shooting is sometimes very disheartening, for he may perhaps beat parts of these extensive covers without hardly getting a shot.*

I would give the young sportsman a week's shooting in these woods in the latter end of October. He should have two or three brace of strong spaniels, like the Clumber breed †, and a good retriever. If he displays in the six days' shooting, patience, perseverance, and a determined resolution to overcome all the formidable obstacles of the Quarters, including now and then a rattling fall into one of the open drains, at the time when excited and anxious to keep close to his dogs, watching their movements, and in momentary expectation of getting a shot, then I declare he is worthy of belonging to the class of old-fashioned sportsmen, and a worthy disciple of St. Hubert. Hereafter I shall enter into some details of the great exertions, fatigue, and patience required by those sportsmen who, during the winter, are devoted to battue shooting: the contrast I suspect will be striking.

Large covers that contain three or four hundred acres,

and trapped, but none have been seen for some years. The buzzard or kite has also totally disappeared.

* About two or three years ago, on the 1st October, two guns bagged five brace of cock pheasants in the low cover of one of these large woods, besides hares. Such success as this rarely occurred.

† I gave one of these dogs three or four years ago to a young sportsman, a connection of mine, who has the shooting in the Quarters. He told me Dash was the best spaniel he had ever had; that he fetched his game tender-mouthed, and that if any other dog attempted to touch it, he instantly fell on him, and drove him off. These dogs are red and white, strongly made in the chest and hind quarters, and have an intelligent countenance. They are in general not good tempered.

should, to insure tolerable success in shooting, have wide rides cut in various parts, equalising the divisions as nearly as the shape of the wood will allow. If the party consists of four or five guns, one or two of them should keep along the ride, to fire at any game crossing the opening, more especially hares and rabbits. If the openings are narrow, then let the best snap shots command the pass. Young sportsmen, from an over-anxiety to get shots, sometimes advance out of the line of shooters; in doing this there is much risk, and I have known several men who have had their legs well peppered, especially if rabbits and hares are numerous in the cover.

Some years ago, I was shooting with a party at Babraham near Cambridge, the residence of the late Mr. Adeane. The Rev. J. Stanley, uncle to Mr. Adeane, and afterwards Bishop of Norwich, was of the party. It was a battue. We arrived at a thick fir plantation on the side of a steepish hill. The spot where I was to take my station was pointed out to me by the gamekeeper: I had been there but a short time, when a shot was fired at a pheasant above me, when my right side received a greater part of the discharge, which fortunately only penetrated through a thick velveteen shooting jacket, as Mr. Stanley, who had fired the shot, was about seventy yards above me. Had he been forty yards nearer, I have little doubt my career would have ended. I instantly called out, not knowing who it was that had fired, that if I received a second salute of that kind, I should return the compliment with two barrels.* Mr. Stanley instantly came running much alarmed, to find out whether

* The late bishop was an excellent and good tempered man, I had met him before at Bagnères de Bigorre in the Pyrenees.

I had been wounded. I soon made him easy on this point, but jokingly told him he must purchase me a new shooting jacket.

I think you generally find that pheasants are more on the alert, and rise quicker in the afternoon than in the morning; which may be accounted for by their feeling a desire to go and feed in the stubbles. Pheasants after they have been frequently shot at, become fully aware that their safety is better secured by their legs than their wings, and if the covers are open at bottom, as the beech woods in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, they then run like greyhounds, and your only chance of getting shots, is to have men or boys to drive them towards you. I hardly know a more wily bird than an old cock pheasant, who on many occasions displays skilful manœuvres to save his life. The hen bird is rather stupid when compared to the male, lies much closer, and if allowed to be shot, you soon find that you have less difficulty in getting shots at them than at the male birds. For the dinner table, the hens have a decided advantage, being more tender and delicate. I recollect once being out with a party pheasant shooting, when we marked down an old cock pheasant in a small shaw, and when we had taken our stations round it we put a brace of spaniels in to make him rise; although the spaniels were hunting him backwards and forwards in this small cover it was more than ten minutes before he took wing, when his fate was sealed.

It is a good plan, in order to prevent the pheasants, hares and rabbits running out of the wood, to have some white feathers tied to twigs a foot or two from the ground, which blowing about, scares the game, and keeps it in the cover. This is frequently done on the

continent. This is preferred in Germany to having men and boys placed on the sides, who from their talking or noise of their footsteps, cause the larger game, more especially the wolves, who are at all times on the alert, instantly to leave the forest or wood. The precaution of feathers is particularly necessary to be adopted when the side of the cover is adjacent to another person's property, for on these occasions your kind neighbours are sometimes keeping a sharp look out to convey to their own larders all stragglers. A rather curious instance of this kind occurred to me many years ago when I resided in Cambridgeshire. I invited some friends on the last day of shooting to a battue, for though contrary to my usual ideas of shooting, one must sometimes comply with the sporting fashions of the day; amongst the number the late Lord Maryborough, brother of the Duke of Wellington. He inquired of me how many guns there would be: I told him five or six, upon which he observed they were too many, and he must decline the invitation, as there is some chance of a man getting shot with so numerous a party.

On the day of this battue, after we had beat some of the plantations round the park, we heard two or three shots fired on the outside, and very near. I sent the gamekeeper to make quietly a reconnaissance in the direction we had heard the shots, as I suspected it was Lord Maryborough, who rented the shooting on that side, and some of the fields of this manor were very near the plantation. The keeper soon returned telling me it was his Lordship with his head gamekeeper, keeping a sharp look out to bag all game that escaped us in that direction. On another side I had two more enemies to my game. A farmer who possessed two or three

hundred acres of open field copyhold land in the parish, a thorough pot hunter, who shot hares in their formes. The other a coal merchant, was much the same style of sportsman. They must have bagged several brace of my fat pheasants, for I fed them well. These are some of the annoyances to which game preservers are liable unless their estates are very extensive.

To say the truth, I could not help feeling rather surprised when I was informed that it was my noble neighbour who was picking up the stragglers, as he rented very extensive shooting, well stocked with game. "*Mais l'appétit vient en mangeant,*" particularly as regards shooting. In other respects he was an excellent neighbour, and kept a princely table.

Of the other party, I fully expected they would be on the alert on this occasion, as I was not on good terms with the farmer, on account of his being an unfair sportsman. There were about eight hundred acres of open field land; this we both shot over, as the lands of the various proprietors were intermixed, and only divided by balks of green sward. Fortunately I had about three hundred acres, enclosed fields, wood, and plantation, independent of five hundred of the open field, which enabled me to keep up a good head of game. At that battue, I dare say we shot forty brace of pheasants, for being the last day of shooting no quarter was given to the hens. The soil of this parish was particularly favourable to the breeding game. I could go out any fine day in September, and bag my eight or ten brace of partridges, as there was much turnip and cole seed.*

* In the paper called "The Field," it is stated that in the beginning of 1859, Lord Stamford and a party of seven guns, shot in one day

With respect to the party that were at this battue, I have the same melancholy report to make. They are all in their graves! Two of them died in the prime of life; one, a baronet, of consumption in the island of Madeira. I feel most grateful to Providence that, notwithstanding all the vicissitudes of my life, I have been spared so long, and in the enjoyment of good health, surrounded by my children and grandchildren.

The pheasants belonging to royalty require to be well fed, as well as those of noblemen and gentlemen, to prevent their going to feed on the farms adjacent, belonging to private individuals, who, in consideration that the birds feed on their stubbles, may fairly feel justified in shooting some of them. This opinion, with some others, I must own I entertained when I was quartered at Windsor, in 1817, with a battalion of the Guards. There was an arable farm, between one and two hundred acres, situated very near Windsor Park. The property belonged to the Hon. Colonel K——, whose son was a captain in the regiment, and was fond of shooting as well as myself. Now as the royal pheasants had, I suspect at that time frequently, *un jour maigre*, they came in the afternoon from Windsor Park into the fields of this farm. The Captain and myself often manœuvred with our dogs to cut off their retreat, and I recollect on one occasion killing a brace right and left

2000 pheasants. Monstrous slaughter! Half or two thirds of these birds were brought up under hens. In the course of the week the party shot near 7000 head of game. The only shooting this can be compared to are the great battues in some parts of Austria and Hungary, in the extensive forests of those countries. But then wild boars, wolves, and stags form part of the animals slaughtered: noble game when compared to the poor pheasants.

when they were steering their course to the park, and we saw at the same time a gamekeeper watching us through the park paling. This anecdote shows that to retain pheasants in your wood and plantations you must not be niggardly of food, and nothing attains this object so well as giving them occasionally in troughs, placed in the covers, white peas, of which pheasants are immoderately fond. By the combined exertions of the late General C——, Captain K——, and myself, all keen sportsmen, our regimental mess was well supplied with royal pheasants, snipes, and occasionally woodcocks and hares. The snipes we shot on the swampy parts of Bagshot Heath, the hares and woodcocks on a small property belonging to a friend of mine near Windsor, on which there were two or three small covers, but no pheasants.

Just nineteen years from this period, I had been encamped on Bagshot Heath with the Greys (1798) in which corps I was then a lieutenant. We had a force of from 8000 to 10,000 cavalry under the command of the late Sir D. Dundas, who was then in high favour with George the Third, and at that time looked up to as the most skilful general in the movement of a large body of cavalry. But, as in the case of the great Duke of Marlborough, that vile passion, avarice, made him contemptible, which was carried so far as even to have patches of scarlet sown on old uniforms.

An anecdote which I know to be true is related of him, which occasioned much disgust at the time. In one of the charges of cavalry, made at Bagshot Heath, the horse of a private of the 7th Light Dragoons fell, and the rider sustained a compound fracture in one of his legs. Whilst the surgeon of the regiment was giving

directions to cut open the boot of the poor fellow, to prevent the great pain of drawing it off, Sir D. Dundas came up to inquire what was the matter. On being told of the accident, and that it was thought necessary to cut the boot, he exclaimed to the Doctor, "Sir, they are my boots; they are my boots, and they shall not be cut." To explain this order Sir David was colonel of the 7th Light Dragoons, and supplied the privates with boots.

What a sad contrast Windsor Castle between the year 1798, when I first knew it, and when I was quartered there with the Guards in 1817. In the former period it was the residence of the finest royal family in Europe. How well I recollect when you might see numerous officers of every corps riding from the encampment in their splendid uniforms (at that time ornamented with much gold and silver lace) to walk on the terrace at Windsor. Here the king and queen, the handsome princesses, some of the princes, a numerous suite of courtiers, and the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood promenaded on the Sunday evening. *O tempora mutantur!* In 1817, not any branch of the royal family resided there, excepting the good old king, who was then deranged. A small table was kept for equerries in waiting, and everything appeared gloomy and silent around this noble edifice. Death about this period had begun to thin the ranks of the royal family; and what a solemn and melancholy scene I witnessed the winter of that year, when it was my duty as Colonel of the Guards at the Castle to receive the body of the Princess Charlotte, escorted by a detachment of the Blues from Claremont. It was about one o'clock, a fine moonlight night in the month of November, when the cortege arrived, and when I saw the coffin taken out of the

hearse, how strongly this scene impressed upon my mind the vicissitudes and vanities of this world. Here was a princess that death had suddenly snatched from us in the midst of youth and happiness, the idol and hope of the nation, and married to the husband of her affections. When the body lay in state, one would have supposed that the whole population of London had come to take a last farewell of this beloved and popular princess, from the immense crowds that arrived, who were allowed to walk round the chamber of death. It is with sincere and heartfelt satisfaction that I find in my old age a revival at Windsor Castle of the happy family scenes of 1798, and I hope and trust their blessings of health and happiness may long continue.

Mais revenons à nos moutons.

When the wind is very high, and the cover on the side of a steepish hill, and you are posted at the bottom on the sides of the wood, with the wind blowing towards you, the gamekeeper with dogs, or two or three men beating down the slope of the hill towards you, you will find it no easy matter to bring down the pheasants, flying like hawks over your head; at least I always did. I recollect when, many years ago, I obtained a day's shooting at Lord Arundel's, Wardour Castle, at the request of Mr. Charles Bowles of Shaftesbury. His agent, the head keeper, a very knowing fellow, by way of saving his pheasants, placed me in a low situation, the cover being on the side of a steep slope, and the wind blowing great guns, and entering the cover with his dogs at the top of the hill, drove a considerable number of pheasants over my head, going with the wind, and apparently traversing the air with almost the swiftness of the golden eagle, which ornithologists calculate at the rate of 140

miles an hour.* The result was anything but satisfactory, for I wasted my powder and shot, and seldom put a pheasant into the bag. On the keeper joining me, I told him plainly, that as his lordship had given me only one day's shooting, I had come with the full expectation of returning to Shaftesbury with well-filled game-bags, which I had a slight chance of doing, in having covers beaten, situated as that he had just gone through on such a windy day, that he must take me to covers well sheltered and well stocked with game, and unless he did this, his fee would be silver instead of gold. This had the desired effect, and I returned to Mr. Bowles entirely satisfied with my day's sport. I have not mentioned the gentleman who attended me as my sporting companion, although he had not been idle. It was the Rev. J. Bowles, better known as the poet Bowles, author of "The Sorrows of Switzerland," and many other excellent poems, and subsequently canon of the Salisbury Cathedral, where I believe he died. I met this gentleman for the first time at the house of his brother, Mr. Charles Bowles, solicitor at Shaftesbury, with whom I was staying for a few days, for the object of having some shooting in the neighbourhood. On the morning appointed for my shooting at Lord Arundel's, to the great astonishment of Mr. C. Bowles and myself, the poet proposed going to shoot with me, if his brother would lend him a gun. "What!" exclaimed my host, "you go out shooting with Captain H—— (I had then a troop in the Greys), "why you have never in your life had a gun in your hand;" adding, "it is very

* The swift is supposed to fly at the rate of 180 miles an hour, and the swallow at 150.

likely he will shoot you Captain H—— instead of a pheasant, for he is very absent." I laughed heartily, and said I would take good care to give his brother a wide berth. As the poet persisted in his desire to accompany me, his brother lent him a single-barrelled gun, and we gave him a few lessons how to prime and load. Off we started in my dog-cart, the place for appointment being four miles distant. My poetical companion fired away at hares, pheasants, and rabbits, but they all escaped uninjured; at last he came to me rather excited, to let me know that he had seen a pheasant sitting on the branch of a tree, and to ask if he might shoot it. The gamekeeper being near, I referred his request to him, who acceded to it, saying as he had had the bad luck not to kill anything, he might have a shot at the pheasant. On hearing this, Mr. Bowles cautiously approached within about twenty yards of the tree, and taking aim for at least two or three minutes, he fired, and down dropped the pheasant, which he brought with much exultation to us. The keeper, touching his hat said, "Sir, the usual fee paid for shooting a hen pheasant sitting is a guinea; but as you are brother to his lordship's agent, I shall let you off for half a guinea," which sum he willingly paid.

The late Mr. Charles Bowles, the solicitor, was a very eccentric character, well known in all that part of Dorsetshire as Charley Bowles, the honest and generous lawyer. I became acquainted with him, having been quartered with my troop for three or four months, the preceding summer, at Shaftesbury, where he would sometimes pay me a morning visit in his slippers and dressing gown, without a hat, and to arrive at my lodgings, he had to pass through one of the principal streets

and across the market-place. No one was surprised at seeing him in this singular costume, having been long accustomed to his eccentric habits. As an antiquary, Mr. C. Bowles's reputation stood high. He devoted much time to antiquarian researches, and was often applied to by families to elucidate abstruse and difficult points in genealogy and heraldry. He was also a collector of ancient coins. The father of these gentleman was a clergyman and had the living of Donhead near Lord Arundel's, Wardour Castle.*

Both pheasants and partridges are very partial to making their nests in clover fields, and as these are mown sooner than the natural grass, many nests are frequently destroyed, and there are instances of old birds sitting so close as to be actually killed by the scythe. Gamekeepers who well understand their business, in the early part of the breeding season, disturb the clover fields with their dogs, to prevent the pheasants and partridges nesting in them. Many gentlemen keep bantam hens, some of which are ready to sit in the breeding season, and the mowers for a small reward will bring the eggs they may find, to be hatched by the bantams. They are very careful in rearing the young birds: but on this subject, I shall dwell more largely in treating on the best mode of rearing pheasants and partridges.

* Lady Blanche, daughter of the Earl of Worcester, and wife of Lord Arundel, celebrated for her brave defence of Wardour Castle, against the parliamentary army, which consisted of 1300 men; and although the little garrison mustered only 45, yet she maintained the place for six days and then capitulated. She died in 1649, aged 66. In the modern residence of the Earl of Arundel, is a fine collection of paintings, chiefly of the Italian School, which was open to the public at the time I was quartered at Shaftesbury.

The cock pheasants generally begin to crow early in March, which can be heard at a considerable distance at this season. They have sometimes been known to come into farm yards, and produce a breed with the common hen, known by the name of pied pheasants, which are a degenerate breed of birds when compared with the wild pheasant. I have seen them in woods, now and then, but was always requested by the owners not to shoot them. You may therefore conclude that these variegated coloured pheasants are only preserved to look at. The ring-necked pheasant is a very handsome bird. The old Duke of Marlborough and the late Lord Berkeley had many of them in their covers, the latter on his estate at Chunford Bridge. I have seen them in other preserves, and shot them; I also shot in Essex * a very handsome mule bird, which I had stuffed and sent to my father-in-law. The hen bird, when it has ceased to propagate its species, gradually assumes the plumage of the male, and at this period the gallantry of the cock pheasant ceases, and she is treated with all the indifference and coolness which old maids now and then experience in this unfeeling world.

Gamekeepers have a decided enmity towards these

* In the month of November 1859, the Marquis of Bristol enjoyed the sports of the field in Doveton Hall Wood, with Earl Jermyn, Lord Alfred Hervey, and Lord North. The supply of game being ample, the noble marquis, though in his eighty-ninth year, quickly brought down eight and a half brace of pheasants in twenty shots, and after a long walk over the farm, viewing past improvements and ordering fresh ones, finished the day by relieving with his usual liberality, the aged and deserving poor of the neighbourhood. The pleasure of the day was much increased by the company of ladies visiting at Ickworth, with a portion of the venerable marquis's fair and amiable forty-five grandchildren.

mule birds, for they assert that they are very pugnacious and troublesome to the younger hens, and are supposed to derive much satisfaction in destroying their eggs whenever they discover their nests; whether this is the case I will not pretend to say, but I know that this opinion prevails amongst gamekeepers.

Latham supposes that the male bird does not always change its plumage from age, and Daniel, in his "Rural Sports," states that he once shot a full grown young pheasant with the variety of plumage. The general opinion which prevails amongst sportsmen is that it is age which produces the change of the plumage of the hen pheasant. Some years ago, it was supposed by gentlemen preserving pheasants that one cock was sufficient in the breeding season for a dozen or more hens; this has been found by subsequent experience to be fallacious, and in the battues that now usually take place on the two or three last days of pheasant shooting the hens are shot. I have been at several of these battues in Norfolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, and Oxfordshire where this was the case. It is difficult to say what should be the proportion of cocks to hens. If I might venture to give an opinion, from long experience, I should say about one cock to four or five hens. I am opposed to the male pheasants having too numerous a seraglio. A cock may be frequently found with a nide of young pheasants; from this circumstance I cannot help suspecting that he is assisting the hen in some of her maternal duties.

The pheasant makes her nest on the ground, and lays from ten to fifteen eggs. The young ones follow the mother as soon as out of the shell, like a brood of young partridges.

The pheasant and its brood continues in the stubbles and young thick hedgerows for some time after the corn is carried, provided they are left quiet, but, if disturbed or shot at they retire into the woods. Pheasants are very fond of salt, and are particularly partial to alder cars, willow beds, and marsh lands, with sedgy covers that are situated near the sea. The woods or covers in which you may have small stacks of buckwheat, or in which the pheasants are occasionally fed with white peas or offal corn, should be kept as quiet as possible. One cover, especially, should never be shot in excepting on the last day or two of the season, when no quarter is given to either sex, and the gamekeepers should keep a sharp look-out in the wood or woods where the buckwheat stacks are placed, to prevent the poachers setting their snares for pheasants; and, in order to discover if any persons had visited the stacks, the keeper should fasten across the approaches to them some fine threads of worsted of a darkish green, and if he finds any of them broken, he may conclude that some poaching had been going on. If these buckwheat stacks cannot be narrowly watched on account of having to preserve an extensive manor, I think it is better not to have any, but to feed the pheasants at certain times. In Cambridgeshire, my keeper used to call the pheasants of an afternoon to feed, with a whistle. It was in an alder car of about an acre and a half near the park, and was surrounded by a wide ditch, in some parts nearly six feet in depth of water, and the entrance was by a plank laid across the ditch. Many of the alders were large and high, on which the pheasants could perch at night, and in some parts the ground was sufficiently dry for the pheasants to feed on. If the

poachers get into the alder car they would find much difficulty in escaping if found by the keeper and his assistants, the only retreat open to them, being the plank across the ditch. Whilst I resided on this property, I believe no poacher had the hardihood to attack the pheasants at night in this fortress. I had then in my service, a sharp vigilant gamekeeper, who, like a Bristol merchant, slept with one eye open. He told me that he had never heard a shot fired in this alder car. Adjoining to it were about five or six acres of an Irish boggy soil of a dark colour, into which you might drive a stake with great facility five or six feet. I had wide and deep trenches made in various directions, and planted it with alders, black Italian poplars, and willows, and other trees of this species; in some parts which had become tolerably dry, I planted blackthorn and other dwarf shrubs. The trees in this ground, owing to its having been well trenched grew surprisingly fast, and in four or five years it became a good pheasant cover. What puzzled me exceedingly was, that I could never find any snipes in this swampy part of the property, although there was a nice trout stream running through one side of it on a gravelly soil. The only snipe I ever saw was a jack, which I shot. I suppose there was something in the soil which when the snipe bored was unpalatable.* When I first went to reside in Cambridge-

* A gentleman meeting a friend one day returning from shooting, inquired what sport he had? he replied, "Very bad indeed, I have only shot an unfortunate jack snipe," pointing to a swampy place not far distant from them. "O dear! have you?" said the gentleman, "why that jack snipe has afforded me amusement for the last month, and probably would for the remainder of the winter, for I am a desperate bad shot," which made his friend laugh heartily.

shire, 1820, Mrs H. at that time had never seen a battue, which I mentioned to my neighbour, the late Colonel Adeane, the proprietor of the Babraham estate. He replied, "I am going to have a battue in two or three days, and if Mrs. H. will come on that day, I will place her in a situation on the Cambridge road where she will have a good view of the pheasant shooting." The invitation was accepted, and the lady stationed by the colonel to have a full view of our proceedings. The plantation we were going to beat might be about a quarter of a mile in length, of breadth rather narrow, and composed chiefly of larch, fir, and beech of four or five years' growth. To deter the pheasants from attempting to escape on the sides of the cover, boys kept walking in advance of the keeper, beating the fences with long sticks, and making a noise. One party, consisting of four guns, was stationed at the opposite end of the plantation from where the keeper entered with his beaters, distant from the road about two or three hundred yards. Our directions from the Colonel were to kill cocks and hens, but on no account to remove from where we were placed after wounded birds. As the beaters began to approach towards the end of the plantation, the pheasants began to rise, two or three at a time. Of these not many escaped who came within shot, but when they arrived within about sixty yards of the end of the plantation, the pheasants rose in all directions, and in such numbers that they might literally be compared to a flock of rooks, for I suppose at least for ten minutes the sportsmen were employed (having no second gun) in priming, loading, and firing as quickly as possible, and it frequently happened when you were taking aim at one pheasant, another rising at the instant near

you, distracted your attention from the first, and induced you to fire in a hurry at the second. It requires a sportsman to possess considerable and good nerves to withstand the excitement and confusion at the rapid firing, and noise of so many pheasants rising at once. Many pheasants were killed, but I think full as many escaped as were shot at, when men who were steady shots would seldom have missed one in the old mode of shooting. The head gamekeeper then came with his retriever to the scene of slaughter. The dog had an excellent nose, and recovered several brace of winged birds. The keeper said that he should be with his retriever at daylight the next morning to find some more wounded birds. Colonel Adeane's pheasants were particularly well fed; two or three of them that were shot high in the air, burst when they fell on the ground from their weight. We saw few hares, and no rabbits.* Mrs. H. was much gratified by the view of the battue, but could not help pitying the fate of the beautiful pheasants.

The Colonel adopted a very efficacious mode to prevent the Cambridge men from sporting on his estate, which was only six miles from Cambridge. He erected a telegraph on a hill, from which they could see over his estate in all directions. During the season, a man constantly resided there during the day, in order to give notice by the working of the telegraph to the head keeper in what part of the estate the party were coursing or shooting. The keeper, who had a pony constantly

* At the last shooting excursion in the preserves at Versailles, the Emperor Napoleon was accompanied by Prince Napoleon, Lord Cowley, &c., making in all nine guns. The day's sport commenced at 10.30, and lasted till five. The result—19 deer, 797 hares, 65 rabbits, 1081 pheasants, and 55 partridges, or 2017 in all.

saddled, instantly started off in the direction pointed out, and if the intruders did not immediately give up sporting, took their names, and they were reported to the heads of their colleges, but this seldom occurred, as they generally made off when they saw the keeper coming.

There are events in the early part of our lives, which when brought to our recollection at an advanced age are certainly a source of much pleasure and satisfaction, more especially if they throw no dark shades on the picture, and leave no trace of regret or remorse. The account I am now about to give of my first battue at General Bulwer's at his residence, Heyden, which lasted three days, combines every circumstance that could prove most gratifying to the taste of some young sportsmen. Our host, the General, had always treated me with the greatest kindness. The shooting party consisted of Colonel Harbord, afterwards Lord Suffield, Colonel Peter, his brother-in-law, Mr. Merry of the War-office, and a barrister, whose name I have forgotten. These were all good sportsmen and agreeable companions. The shooting was first-rate of that period, and the *bonne chère* and excellent wines of our host, and pleasant conversation of the party, made the evenings worthy rivals of our day's enjoyment.

The game was in great abundance, particularly pheasants, and I think we killed on the average, each day, about one hundred and forty head of game, mostly hares and pheasants (the rabbits were kept down on account of the young plantations), and six or seven couple of woodcocks. This shooting would have exactly suited the taste of sportsmen who have a decided aversion to the fatigue of beating strong covers, as most of the shooting

was in the plantations of the above description, mostly of four, five, and six years' growth. The walking also was extremely pleasant, the soil being in general light and sandy. The general was too infirm to shoot, but came out to us on a pony, in the middle of the day, and remained two or three hours to see the sport, and we had the good fortune to have the weather propitious during the whole time we remained at Heyden. The game was spread out every evening in the hall for our inspection. In this hall, I recollect, was a large and fine picture, by Schneider, of deer and a variety of dead game. Of this party, I regret to say, there is not one but myself alive. Mr. Merry who had been a considerable time in the War-office, was a keen and good sportsman, and an excellent shot; and, on this occasion, he was highly gratified at having killed more woodcocks than any one of the party. I had not met him for nearly fifty years, and concluded he was dead; when, about four years ago, being on a visit to Lord de S., at Cheltenham, I was not a little surprised when I heard that a Mr. Merry was coming to dinner, to find that it was the Mr. Merry who had been of our shooting party at General Bulwer's in 1807. I gave him a hearty shake of the hand, and we talked over all the events of our battue, which he still retained in his memory. At a subsequent year I also met him at his Lordship's table and again together drank a glass of champagne. Mr. Merry died at Cheltenham about two years ago, at the great age of ninety. He retired from the War-office when about fifty years old, and being high in the department, had a pension of 2000*l.* per annum for forty years; the aggregate sum amounting to 80,000*l.* Do the officers of the army and navy receive such

pensions as these, although exposed for several years to every climate and all the risks of war? Colonel Peter died at the age of eighty-two, about the same time as Mr. Merry; I was to have met him about six years ago at Major-General Sir R. Harvey's, near Norwich, with whom we were staying a few days, and much regretted that the Colonel was prevented accepting the invitation. Two of the sons of General Bulwer, who have so highly distinguished themselves, one as a diplomatist, the other as an author, were little boys when I was Brigade Major to the General in 1803; we were great friends, and many a game of romps we had together. I also experienced much kindness from the late Mrs. Bulwer, who was some years younger than her husband.

On the breaking up of the large cavalry camp on Bagshot Heath in 1798, the Greys received a route to proceed to Birmingham and Coventry. During this march we halted one night at Woodstock, and soon after our arrival we were anxious to visit Blenheim, raised by a grateful nation for the residence of the great Duke of Marlborough at an expense of 500,000*l.** The architect employed was Vanburgh. The paintings, consisting of the works of Rubens, Teniers, Kneller, &c. were certainly much to be admired, but at that period of my life my thoughts were more fixed on field sports than on the fine arts. At a more advanced age I should have been more observant of these treasures, having

* About the middle of the grand approach is a magnificent bridge of three arches, under one of which runs a small stream, which forms a large lake in a valley below. Alluding to the first duke's avarice, these two lines were written:—

"The bridge his high ambition shows,
The stream an emblem of his bounty flows."

been a great amateur and collector to a certain extent of paintings. But I must confess that my curiosity was then much more excited by the account I had heard of the gold and silver pheasants which might be seen flying wild in the plantations near the house. When I was gratified with the sight of those beautiful birds, how anxiously I wished to have had a few shots at them. Daniel (in his "Rural Sports") says, "It is supposed at that time 300 or 400 brace of each of these species are to be found at large within the park wall." I do not recollect seeing any of these pheasants when I revisited Blenheim in 1834.

The Duke of Marlborough, great grandfather of the present duke, was very fond of shooting. His Blenheim spaniels were small, red and white, with large black eyes, black nose, legs and tail well feathered, a spot on the forehead, and altogether very pretty dogs.

The duke of that day beat with these spaniels the plantations and woods that were not too thick at bottom, and I have heard that it was a very pleasing sight to see four or five brace of these beautiful well trained dogs hunting so close near the duke, that you might almost throw a cast net over them.

A puppy of this breed, which is now almost extinct, was given to one of my daughters by a grandson of the duke. He was handsome, most intelligent, and had an excellent nose. Poor Bijou was a great favourite with all the family. He travelled with us in Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, and died at the good old age of fourteen years. He was a thorough aristocratic dog, and would never take his meals in the kitchen, or go down a back stair.

I conclude this article on pheasant shooting by

quoting a passage from the "Quarterly Review" on "English Field Sports:"

"We wish all hearty English Lords and Squires a good bag, and, if possible, a hard day's exercise in filling it."

"See how with emulated zeal they shive,
Thread the loose sedge, and through the thicket drive!
No babbling voice the bosom falsely warms,
Or swells the panting heart with vain alarms,
Till all at once their choral tongues proclaim
The secret refuge of the lurking game.
Swift is their course, no lengthen'd warnings now
Space to collect the scatter'd thoughts allow,
No weary pointer shows the cautious eyes
Where from his russet couch the bird shall rise.
Perhaps, light running o'er the mossy ground,
His devious steps your sanguine hopes confound;
Or by the tangled branches hid from sight,
Sudden he tries his unexpected flight.
Soon as the ready dogs their quarry spring,
And swiftly spreads his variegated wing,
Ceas'd is their cry, with silent look they wait
Till the loud gun decides the event of fate;
Nor, if the shots are thrown with erring aim,
And proudly soars away the unwounded game,
Will the staunch train pursue him as he flies
With useless speed, and unavailing cries.
No open view along the uncumbered field
To the cool aim will time and distance yield;
But the nice circumstance will oft demand
The quickest eyesight and the readiest hand.
Swift as he rises from the thorny brake,
With instant glance the fleeting mark to take,
And with prompt aim the transient moment seize,
'Mid the dim gloom of intervening trees,
His gaudy plumage when the male displays
In bright luxuriance to the solar rays,
Arrest with hasty shot his wizzing speed
And see unblam'd the shining victim bleed;

"But when the hen to thy discerning view
Her sober pinion spreads of duskier hue,
The attendant keeper's prudent warning hear,
And spare the offspring of the future years;
Else shall the fine which custom laid of old,
Avenge the slaughter by thy forfeit gold."—PYR.

I forgot to state, after the surrender of Fort St. Philippe, the particulars of a narrow escape that the late Admiral Sir C. Adam, Colonel Provost, two officers, and myself, had of being made prisoners by a detachment of French cavalry:

The military corps of the army, and the officers and crews of the line-of-battle ships commanded by Sir Charles Adam, were all in high spirits at our capturing the fort of St. Philippe, and having made the whole garrison prisoners of war. A day or two afterwards, Sir Charles Adam proposed our having a pic-nic to the mouth of the River Ebro, where it emptied itself into the Mediterranean, and was considered the finest and largest river in Spain. Our party consisted of Sir Charles, Colonel Prevost, Captain Arabin, R.A., and an Engineer officer and myself. Sir Charles very kindly undertook to provide all that regarded the commissariat, for on shore we had only our rations. A mule was provided for the conveyance of the eatables, &c., which fortunately did not start till sometime after us, or, as the sequel will show, it would have fallen into the hands of the French. I lent Sir Charles a strong grey horse, as he was a large heavy man, and another horse to Captain Arabin. I rode a very handsome Arab stallion. We started early in the morning, anticipating much pleasure in this excursion to the banks of the Ebro, distant about twelve miles. But the Camino Real, or royal road, which led to Saragossa and Valencia

passed through a wild and sterile country totally uninhabited. The weather was all we could wish in the month of July. We had proceeded not more than three or four miles when to our surprise we saw four or five Spanish hussars galloping full speed towards us, and they called out lustily as they passed us, "Los Franceses vienen," the French are coming. However, not having had any intelligence of the French having crossed the Ebro, and putting little faith in this report of the Spaniards, we decided on continuing our route till we ascertained the truth. Two or three hundred yards further brought us to a sharp turn of the road to the left, when we found the Spaniards had spoken the truth, for a detachment of French dragoons was pursuing at full speed the Spanish hussars. We instantly halted, and the French officer who led on the dragoons did the same to reconnoitre the strength of our party. I advised Sir Charles, as we were no match for them, to be off immediately, sailors not being the best horsemen; in two or three minutes we heard the French officer call out "En avant!" when we thought it high time to retire as fast as our horses' legs would carry us. The pursuit lasted for about a mile and half, but as the horses of the French were rather blown by their gallop after the hussars, their speed began to slacken, and the fire from their carbines proved fortunately harmless. At no great distance behind me was an orderly of the 20th Light Dragoons, mounted on an old English horse, and I soon heard the poor fellow call out, "I shall be taken prisoner, sir, as my horse is completely knocked up," and shortly after on looking back, I saw a French dragoon had captured him, and we heard afterwards that he had received a sabre wound in

the shoulder. At last we arrived near a large shed occupied, as an advanced post, by a sergeant and fifteen men of the 20th Light Dragoons, who on hearing the fire of the carbines turned out and were mounted. The appearance of this party had the effect of stopping our pursuers, who faced about and retired towards the Ebro. Sir Charles had a very narrow escape of being made prisoner, for his horse threw a fore shoe when about fifty yards from our advanced guard. My Arab slipped on the surface of a piece of flat rock in the middle of the road, but by his great activity recovered himself. Thus ended our pic-nic.

CHAP. VII.

GROUSE SHOOTING.—DISEASE IN GROUSE.—MAN OF ROSS.—CARMARTHENSHIRE SHOOTING.

"It's up Glenbarchan's braes I gaed,
And o'er the bent of Killiebraid,
And mony a weary cast I made
To cuittle the moor-fowl's tail."

SPORTSMEN look forward with infinite pleasure to the 12th of August, when, satiated with the gaieties of London, they once more breathe the pure air, and hasten to the moors and mountains to enjoy grouse shooting in Scotland and the northern counties of England. The late Duke of Rutland had some very good shooting on his moors in Derbyshire, which were strictly preserved, and the most southerly county in which grouse are found.

The species of grouse which I am now going to describe, known as red grouse, I have never found in other parts of Europe where I have shot, and from every inquiry I have made respecting the red grouse, I entertain the opinion that this species is only found in the United Kingdom. I have also the authority of the

learned ornithologist, Dr. Latham, that the red grouse is peculiar to the British Islands. The male weighs about nineteen ounces, and is in length about fifteen inches. The bill is black, the inside hazel coloured. The throat is red. Plumage on the head and neck of a light tawney red. The back feathers are of a deep red, and on the middle of each feather is a large black spot. The breast and belly are of a dull purplish brown. The wing feathers are dusty; the tail consists of eighteen feathers of an equal length, all black, except the four middle, which are barred with red. The thighs are of a pale red; the legs and feet clothed to the very claws, with thick soft white feathers. The claws are whitish, very broad and strong. The female weighs * about fifteen ounces; the colours in general are duller than those of the male. The breast and belly are spotted with white, and the tips of some of the covers of the wings are of the same colour. These birds pair in the spring, and lay from six to ten eggs. The young broods follow the hen through the summer; in the winter they pack, and are sometimes found forty or fifty together, and are then so shy and wild that it is extremely difficult to get a shot at them. They are mostly found on the tops of the hills, being rarely on the sides, and scarcely ever found in the valleys. Their food is the mountain berries and the tops of the heath.

To thoroughly enjoy grouse shooting, a sportsman

* Prince Edward, of Saxe Weimar, when grouse shooting in 1858, killed on the moors of Glen Tiddick a most curious specimen of a grouse, which had for two years been well known to the foresters as "the blue grouse." The plumage is of blue silver grey, interspersed with fawn or dove coloured feathers.

should be master of a pair of legs that never tire, more especially in Scotland where the heather is higher than in the English moors, and frequently a pack of grouse on rising, direct their course across a valley to a neighbouring hill, which if the sportsmen follow obliges them to descend and ascend considerable heights, which under a broiling summer in the month of August is no easy task. There are some moors where sportsmen may ride, and others where it would be difficult to do so without the risk of the animal falling from the natural obstacles of the country, such as bogs, morasses, rocky ground, &c. A strong sure-footed pony about fourteen hands high which stands fire well is a real treasure to any sportsman whose physical powers are unequal to the fatigue of walking. I adopted the same system of walking in grouse shooting for the reason I have already stated in partridge shooting — that I had a better command over my dogs, and get more shots when on foot, as you are then enabled to beat swampy parts of the moor, in which the grouse frequently lie during the heat of the day. Some sportsmen prefer the old English spaniel or setter for grouse shooting; the reason assigned for this preference is that their feet are better protected by the long hair from the ling, which in dry weather cuts acutely. They are also supposed to hunt with more spirit, and better able to go through a hard day's work, but they require more water than pointers. Some sportsmen are of opinion that they have finer noses than the pointer. In this I cannot agree, more particularly if the latter is well bred. In grouse shooting I always shot with pointers, with the exception of one dog, which was a first cross between a setter and a pointer. She possessed all the good qualities that a

sportsman could desire; no day was too long for her, and during the many years I pursued field sports, I never had her equal. I have an excellent likeness of her in an oil painting, by a skilful animal painter, with an old favourite hunter.

The old cock grouse sometimes rises with the pack; endeavour to shoot him; he is easily distinguished by his cackling; very frequently he rises forward making the same noise, with the object of leading the sportsman away from the brood. He is also their pilot in inducing them to take longer flight, and to increase their shyness. Grouse, like other game, lie best on a warm sunny day, and if the heather is high, and your dogs steady, a tolerable good shot may calculate on bagging on a well preserved moor in Scotland, in the early part of the season, his five and twenty or thirty brace of grouse, which I really think ought to satisfy the most voracious appetite for slaughter. I am aware that more than treble thirty brace * were shot by a gentleman in Argyleshire in one day. His name was Campbell; he was a first-rate shot. He killed one hundred brace of grouse in one day. He had three or four sets of fresh dogs, and one or two keepers to supply him with guns, as soon as he had discharged his two barrels. This extraordinary sporting exploit was, I believe, performed

* In the month of March grouse, generally speaking, quit the low grounds, and go to the high grounds in pairs. Sportsmen desirous of renting moors, should now send an intelligent gamekeeper with good dogs, to ascertain if there is good breeding-stock left. If the moor is extensive, the ground should be divided into beats, and if the keeper sees about twenty or thirty brace paired, from ten o'clock in the morning until the afternoon, good sport may be reasonably expected; this precaution is particularly necessary, as the person renting the moor pays beforehand.

on the 12th of August, and I cannot help suspecting that in order to make up the hundred brace, a fair proportion of squeakers were included. It was supposed at the time that Mr. Campbell's object in making this great slaughter amongst his grouse was to obtain a good annual rent for the grouse shooting on his moor, and as this singular day's sport found its way into the newspaper, it is probable Mr. Campbell obtained a good sporting tenant from the south. In 1856, I heard from a friend whose son was shooting in Scotland that it was the worst season that had been known for a great many years. In the spring, the weather had been so severe as to destroy many of the young birds; and at a more advanced period of the summer some epidemic disease had destroyed a vast number of the old and young birds, and that a considerable proportion of those that were shot were not fit for the table.* To obviate in some measure this evil, it was considered absolutely necessary by some of the best sportsmen to give the grouse a jubilee in the season of 1857. If this was not done, many of the gentlemen who rented moors, intended to give them up, for to continue their destruction might be compared to killing the goose to get the golden eggs. I have heard that the grouse on the moors† in the northern counties of England had escaped the disease. At the table of families where I visited, grouse coming

* By the perusal of the following note, it will be seen that there was excellent shooting in Caithness, when on 60,000 acres, of which 10,000 were kept as a deer forest, in 17 days with usually 4 guns, 1000 brace of grouse, 60 brace of black game, besides some hares, were shot.

† On the farm of Conybould, Corgaff, Strathdon, in April 1858, a grouse dropped her eggs in a corn-field, opposite the farm house. So near an approach to cultivated fields and human habitation is very rare in this wild bird of the moors.

from those parts were perfectly good. I am not aware that any naturalist has, as yet, given a satisfactory explanation of the cause of the disease in grouse; however, to judge from the numbers killed in most of the seasons, one would conclude that a fair stock of birds was left for breeding.

Various schemes have been proposed by sportsmen and gamekeepers as remedies for getting rid of the disease in grouse. Some have proposed to procure the eggs from the moors where the grouse were healthy, and endeavour to have them hatched on the moors where the birds had suffered from disease. This sounds well in theory, but I suspect the greatest difficulty would be found to put it in practice, as grouse cannot be reared like pheasants or partridges, under hens. A gunmaker, who appears to be conversant with the moors in Scotland, recommends that the gamekeepers should not destroy the peregrine falcon, for this reason, that as the weak and diseased birds are unable in their flight to keep up with others, the falcon is certain to pounce on him, and thus the healthy grouse would escape. Now as the peregrine falcon is known to be a remarkably swift bird on the wing, he would certainly find no difficulty in the choice of his bird, and it is natural to conclude that these sharp-sighted and keen birds of prey know well by instinct to "pick the plums out of the pudding." As an instance of this, when trying my dogs, on one of the moors in Caernarvonshire, a peregrine falcon rose from the heath, within a few yards of me, and on going to the spot, I found he had just killed a fine full-grown young grouse, and was feasting on his brains. As his body was not mangled I had him for dinner, and much regretted that I had not my gun to have shot this for-

midable enemy to game.* The material distinction between the old and modern sportsman, is that the former, in a day's shooting, was satisfied with a moderate quantity of game, whereas the latter is a perfect glutton in this respect, and as I believe I before remarked, their vanity is much gratified by seeing their names in the newspapers with the list of game killed at these battues, And what a temptation this is to poachers.

> "'Tis an old maxim in the schools,
> That vanity's the food of fools;
> Yet now and then your men of wit,
> Will condescend to take a bit."—SWIFT.

Some sportsmen entertain an opinion that the red grouse have degenerated of late years, and the reason they assign for this, is their having bred from the same stock for many years; but I confess I have my doubts about the theory, for on moors, sometimes several hundred acres in extent, I see no obstacle to the grouse bred on one moor breeding with those of other hills,

* These peregrine falcons were, some years ago, brought over from Germany by the late Captain C. Sturt, R.N., who was fond of falconry, and turned out in the Isle of Purbeck to breed on the high cliffs of that coast. Captain Sturt was at that time owner of Brownsea Island, and resided in the castle. He had Germans to train and feed his falcons. I shot during one season in the isle of Purbeck, and a gamekeeper of the late Mr. Calcraft told me that it was a sad job for the game when Captain Sturt turned out the peregrine falcons. I purchased a young bird of him; it had a brilliant and beautiful eye, and had been procured by a boy, who, with ropes fastened about his body, had been let down over the cliff, and got the young ones out of the nest. Montague asserts, that the peregrine falcon can fly at the rate of 150 miles an hour. I believe no bird but the swift can exceed this rate of flight. The late Colonel Thornton who made use of these birds in hawking, states that a peregrine falcon in pursuit of a snipe, flew nine miles in eleven minutes, without including the frequent turns.

where they may be healthy and strong, and we know that when the grouse pack, generally in the month of November, they are extremely wild, and take long flights. The most plausible reason for grouse diminishing in size, may, I think, be accounted for when they have suffered severely from one or two winters, during which they have found much difficulty in procuring a sufficiency of food, and the spring of 1856 was most severe, and therefore tends to corroborate this theory. Partridges suffer sometimes from a rigorous winter. I recollect shooting a brace near Windsor, about Christmas, they were in the most wretched condition, as the term is, "as light as a feather," from starvation. I threw them away. I have never heard that either pheasants or partridges have degenerated, although they are so numerous in Norfolk and Suffolk; I have heard sportsmen say, indeed I have found it myself, that in preserves the former are sometimes so well fed and become so fat that the beaters and dogs find some difficulty in making them rise. On my property in Cambridgeshire partridges were numerous, large, and of an excellent flavour, so much so, that on my coming to England from Gascony, where we resided, Mrs. H. requested me on my return, to bring her three or four brace of these partridges, which I did, by having them potted, and they were found very superior in flavour to those in that part of France. I mention this circumstance to controvert the opinion that game degenerates from a country being well stocked with it.

In the short peace of 1802, Baron Homperch's regiment of Hussars, in which I was major, was disbanded, in consequence of which I found myself for the first time for several years out of harness during the summer,

and although half-pay is not altogether so agreeable as regards the pocket, I felt as much gratified in obtaining my liberty as a bird that escapes from his cage, and certainly soldiers and sailors are sure to welcome a change of any kind. I determined during this summer to make a tour in South Wales, and visit a family in Cardiganshire, entertaining a hope I should have some good trout fishing and moderate grouse shooting on the Welsh hills. In pursuance of this plan, I made an arrangement with my old Rugby school-fellow, Mr. K. (afterwards Sir C. K., Bart.) to leave London the middle of July, and I verily believe that when I found myself seated alongside of my friend in his tandem, and in our rear our two servants in my dog cart with the dogs, never did happier or lighter hearts leave the metropolis, for at that early period of life everything in this world is *couleur de rose.*

On our arrival at Ross we determined to remain there a day, to see the house where John Kyle, "the good man of Ross," resided. The house at that time was an inn. In a niche, in the front, is a statue of Mr. Kyle in the dress of the time of Charles II. He was a tall, robust man with prominent features. This excellent, generous, and kind-hearted man was born at Dymock in Herefordshire, in 1637, and died 1724. He was interred in the church the spire of which was built at his expense; and the fine elm trees, which we saw in the extensive churchyard, were planted by his own hands. The prospect from the churchyard is particularly fine, and when you view the old Gothic church, and see around you the monuments and tombs of so many of the dead, a feeling of a melancholy nature is impressed on the mind even of youth, which at that age, however, is transient. Near

the churchyard is a place called "the Prospect," which gives a full view of the serpentine course of the river Wye, and the exquisite scenery of the surrounding country. We also went to see the favourite walk of the good man of Ross, which is at some distance from the church, to which you are conducted by a gravel walk across the fields. It is situated on a rocky eminence near the Wye, and is shaded by the foliage of the beech and a variety of forest trees.

There is a curious story related that, after the death of Mr. Kyle, some persons were so thoroughly unfeeling as to cut down some of the elms which he had planted in the churchyard, and that immediately afterwards three young elm shoots made their appearance in the pew he occupied in the church, which from reverence to his memory have been allowed to remain, and now form a canopy over the seat of this excellent man. Amongst the charitable acts of this good man, is an almshouse built at his expense for a few deserving poor people. He also had an aqueduct constructed to convey water from the river Wye to the town, and Pope tells us, in the following verses, that all these noble and charitable acts were performed with an income of *500l.* per annum.

"Who hung with woods yon mountain's sultry brow?
From the dry rock who bade the waters flow?
Not to the skies in useless columns tost,
Or in proud falls magnificently lost,
But clear and artless, pouring through the plain
Health to the sick, and solace to the swain.
Whose causeway parts the vale with shady rows?
Whose seats the weary traveller repose?
Who taught that heaven-directed spire to rise?
'The Man of Ross!' each lisping babe replies.
Behold the market-place with poor o'erspread!
The Man of Ross divides the weekly bread:

He feeds yon alms-house, neat, but void of state,
Where age and want sit smiling at the gate,
Him, portion'd maids, apprentic'd orphans blest,
The young who labour, and the old who rest.
Is any sick? the Man of Ross relieves,
Prescribes, attends, the medicine makes and gives.
Is there a variance? enter but his door,
Balked are the courts, and contest is no more.
Despairing Quacks, with curses fled the place,
And vile attorneys, now an useless race.
Thrice happy man! enabled to pursue,
What all so wish, but want the power to do,
Oh! say what sums that generous hand supply?
What mines to swell that boundless charity?
Of debts and taxes, wife and children clear,
This man possest — five hundred pounds a year."

On our road to Caermarthen, through Abergavenny and Crickhowel, the bold and grand scenery of mountains and craggy rocks, and here and there verdant and fertile valleys well watered by small rapid streams, are most gratifying to the lover of the picturesque. On our left we had for many miles the river Usk, in which are caught excellent salmon and good sized trout. In rocky and commanding situations you occasionally behold the ruins of old castles, some built by the ancient Britons as a defence against the encroachments of the Saxons and Normans, and others chiefly by Edward the First to retain his conquest and keep in subjection his newly acquired subjects. The Welsh, like the Swiss, are strongly attached to their native country, and resisted with success, under their princes, all efforts of the Saxons and Normans to subjugate them, until the reign of Edward the First*, who at last fairly starved them into

* The conquest of Wales was finally achieved by Edward the First in 1223, soon after the battle between the Welsh Prince Llewellyn, and

submission. The Welsh are a brave and hospitable people, choleric, but their resentment soon subsides; they have the character of being litigious, and fond of law, and most people who indulge in this passion find it a very losing game. The old Welsh families are very proud of their genealogies. From what I observed in the character of the lower classes, they appear to have rather a dislike to strangers, looking on them with a suspicious eye.

On the road we frequently met pretty young Welsh girls on their ponies, daughters of small farmers, going to market; their head dress was at that time a small black hat, which we thought very becoming. This national part of their dress is, I have heard, now exchanged for a bonnet—*tant pis!* as the former was characteristic of the country, and gave the wearer a coquettish look. On our arrival at Caermarthen (the native place of the late gallant General Sir Thomas Picton, Bart.), my friend left me, steering his course to Flintshire on a visit to Sir Thomas Hanmer, whose two sons had been at Rugby with us: I proceeded to my friend's house in Cardiganshire, who gave me a hearty welcome, and with whom I remained a month which appeared to me a week from the kindness I experienced and the delightful rides I took with the young ladies of the family in that beautiful country. The river Tivey produces excellent salmon and a species of white

Mortimer, Edward's general. The former was slain, and 2000 of his followers put to the sword. The character of King Edward the First is thus described by Hume: "that he was the model of a politic and warlike king. He possessed industry, penetration, courage, vigilance and enterprise. He was frugal in all his expenses that were not necessary; he knew how to open the public treasures on a proper occasion."

trout called the souen*, which when in season is a rival to the trout. As there was no grouse shooting within some miles of my friend's residence, he recommended that I should go with Mr. B., who was also a sportsman and an inmate of his house, to the village of Lampeter, distant about twenty miles in Caermarthenshire. He informed us that we should meet with a small inn there, in which we should find ourselves comfortably lodged, and the host and hostess attentive and obliging, and in the neighbourhood a considerable extent of moors and grouse hills, on which, although not preserved, we should have some tolerable shooting, and good trout fishing in the Tivey.* We accordingly started for Lampeter a day or two before the 12th, in order to obtain some information about the shooting, and to reconnoitre the hills. On our arrival at our quarters at Lampeter, we found ourselves very comfortably lodged, and the character given of our landlord and landlady was fully verified. Excellent Welsh mutton, salmon and trout from the Tivey, and mild home-brewed ale, were some of the good things which the hostess provided for our

* The way of catching salmon in the river Tivey, some miles above Cardigan, was rather curious, and peculiar to these parts. Two fishermen, each seated in the middle of his corricle, and being at a distance of some yards from each other, the rope of a net is fastened to the side of each corricle, and with a paddle the fishermen direct their course down the stream. As soon as they feel they have a salmon in their net, they close, and paddle to the banks of the river to land their fish. The corricle was in shape like a large tub, the framework which is of wood is light, and covered with the hide of an ox. Much skill and practice is required to prevent their being upset when you get into them, which I found from experience, for on endeavouring to get into one, it instantly upset, and I got a ducking to the no small amusement of the ladies and bystanders. When the men leave off fishing, they take their corricles out of the water, and carry them home on their backs.

table. * For rather more than half a century ago travellers rarely frequented this retired village; but macadamised roads and steam have made a wonderful change in this respect, and travellers now really appear to ferret out every obscure hole and corner of the United Kingdom.

On the day after our arrival, we were all impatience to make a reconnaissance of the moors, taking a guide and our dogs. After beating about the hills for two or three hours and finding a pack of nine or ten grouse, we returned to our quarters. Early on the morning of the 12th we commenced our shooting, and when it is taken into consideration that the hills were not preserved, we had no reason to complain of our day's sport in having killed seven or eight brace of grouse and a mountain hare.*

This, I doubt not, will be called a very contemptible bag by sportsmen of the present day, who, in the preserved moors, return home dissatisfied if they have not shot with their own gun, fifteen or twenty brace of grouse. The French proverb says, "L'appetit vient en mangeant," and so it may be said of those sportsmen who have such a voracious appetite for slaughter. For the first week four or five brace of grouse were about the average of what we bagged, and when we found grouse scarce, we got some snipe shooting in the bogs

* To prove how destructive hawks are to the grouse, Robert Briggs, who was gamekeeper to Lord Abpyne (now Marquis of Huntly, in Perthshire, relates, "that he found a nest of a blue-falcon hawk, having six young ones, and for curiosity I let them grow; every morning and every evening I visited the nest, to pick up the legs and wings of the young grouse, and I calculated that in bringing up those young ones, the pair of old birds destroyed about 800 grouse. These blue-falcon's nests are on the ground." I think there must be an exaggeration in

on these mountains, where these birds breed. Every day we had our dinner brought out to us at two o'clock, which consisted of cold Welsh mutton, grouse, salad, and a good allowance of home-brewed ale. This repast, with keen appetites, was thoroughly enjoyed by us, seated on the tops of the hills with the grand and extensive prospect around us. At the end of the week my sporting friend left me; his physical powers were far inferior to my own, and he declared he was quite done up with the great fatigue of walking over the Welsh moors. I persevered in shooting for another week, with alternate success, having, as I before said, always the resource of some snipe shooting; but at the expiration of that time, a most determined rain set in, night and day, which I bore patiently for eight and forty hours, in the hope of a favourable change in the weather. But in this I was disappointed, and what increased my *ennui* was, that I could get no books from my landlady but a Bible and "Hervey's * Meditations among the Tombs," which had the effect of making me so melancholy, combined with the weather and the want of a companion, that I felt half inclined to jump into the river Tivey; so the next morning I ordered my dog

the number of grouse destroyed, although there can be no doubt they must have destroyed a great number as food for their young ones. If Mr. Briggs had been my gamekeeper, and I found out he was indulging his curiosity at the expense of the lives of such a number of grouse, I should have dismissed him from my service.

* James Hervey, a clergyman of exemplary piety, was born in 1714, and succeeded his father in the living of Weston Turville and Collingtree, in Northamptonshire. This excellent divine died on Christmas Day 1758, leaving the little he possessed to buy warm clothing for the poor in that severe season. No works are more generally known than his "Meditations" and "Contemplations."

cart, and returned to my friend in Cardiganshire. My chief object in mentioning this sporting expedition in South Wales was to show that a moderate and reasonable sportsman might, at that period, get shooting in many parts of the country without being molested sometimes by a rude gamekeeper to give his name and show his game license. Probably at this time those grouse hills in the neighbourhood of Lampeter are preserved, and let by the proprietor to sportsmen for 200 or 300*l.* per year. That is the present system with a vast number of landowners.

A recent occurrence was read to me of two gentlemen, who being desirous of getting grouse in the month of November, when they are generally packed, and so wild and shy that it is most difficult to get a shot at them, went to consult a small farmer, who had resided many years near some moors, if I mistake not, in Yorkshire, on the best way to accomplish this object. The farmer said it would be fruitless to go on the moors with dogs, for they would then not have the slightest chance of getting within shot of the grouse; but he observed, "when I have been driving my cart and horse recently across the moor, I have sometimes seen the birds at no great distance from me, and under no alarm at my passing by them, therefore if you get into my cart, and let me drive you, and conceal yourselves as much as possible, and particularly not to look at the grouse until within shot, I am pretty certain you will have some sport." This scheme was carried into execution, the sportsmen having large single barrelled guns loaded with large shot, which killed at sixty or seventy yards, and the day being favourable the plan answered admirably, as they managed to bag seventeen and a half brace of

grouse, three partridges, a cock pheasant and a rabbit. Grouse at this season are rather dry unsavoury birds, but of course very desirable as part of the second course, from its being a *rara avis*. A thorough old sportsman recommends that the best time for shooting grouse in August or September, is from eight A.M. until five in the afternoon, and from eleven till two o'clock at a later period of the season. At this latter period, you should shoot with what sportsmen call their grouse gun, a single barrel that will take a heavy load, and the shot should be two or three ounces. An old pointer, who knows his business well, and will manage to head them when they are running, is most valuable.

The best chance of getting a few brace of grouse the latter end of October or November is on a warm day, for they will then sometimes lie tolerably well, particularly if the heather is strong.

In 1800, a gentleman shot in Inverness-shire fifty-two brace of grouse in one day, having never killed more than one bird at a time.

A system of catching moor game with nets, in the same way as partridges are netted, has been practised within these few years on the moors in Scotland, and it is very certain that many grouse are ready for the London market, taken before the 12th of August.*

* One reason recently assigned, and I believe a substantial one, for the scarcity of grouse in many parts of the Highlands is that deer-stalking is now become a favourite sport of so many of the sportsmen who visit Scotland annually in the autumn. The chief object of the gamekeepers who look after these deer forests is to keep them as quiet as possible, that these animals may not be disturbed. To accomplish this, they set no traps to destroy vermin, and it is strongly suspected that they employ unlawful means to keep down the breed of grouse in these forests, that there may be no inducement for grouse shooters to beat these districts.

Mr. St. John, in his very entertaining book "The Wild Sports of the Highlands," draws the character of the Highland and English poacher, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter; and much of this description may perhaps be correct. He says "the life of a Highland poacher is far different from that of an Englishman following the same profession. Instead of a sneaking night-walking ruffian, a mixture of cowardice and ferocity, as most English poachers are, and ready to commit any crime that he hopes to perpetrate with impunity, the Highlander is a bold fearless fellow, sporting openly by daylight, taking his sport in the same manner as the laird or Sassenach who rents the ground." The English night poachers who go out to shoot the pheasants on the perch are certainly men of desperate character, but not in general cowards, of which the bloody conflicts they sometimes have with gamekeepers is a decided proof. In an enclosed highly cultivated country like England with a numerous population, it would be almost impossible for the poachers to shoot in the day time with impunity; not so in the highlands of Scotland, where there are thousands of acres of forests, moors, and mountains, where few or no inhabitants are seen, excepting shepherds, who are mostly on amicable terms with the poacher, and connive at his unlawful proceedings. By St. John's account, Ronald is a noble specimen of a Highland poacher of herculean strength. The story of his having defended himself successfully against five men who were sent to apprehend him for poaching is well told and very interesting. He appears to have had on this occasion the strength of a

44914

Samson and the courage of a lion—"Si non e vero, e ben trovato." *

In the early part of the season, when the heather is strong and the birds sit close, a fair shot ought seldom to miss a grouse, for they are at that time slow in their flight, and I think more easy to be killed than a full grown partridge, but to enjoy this sport in real perfection, go to the moors six weeks later, when the grouse are become strong and rather shy, and then if the sportsman succeeds in making a good bag by quick and long shots, he must feel far more gratified in such success than in having killed on the 12th his five and twenty or thirty brace of young grouse, many of which had not arrived at their full growth. If grouse shooting were not to commence till the 20th of August, the day fixed for the shooting of black game, the eight days gained by this postponement, would, I conceive, be of much benefit to the grouse in respect of their growth.†

I never had any good grouse shooting in Ireland. I went one year with a friend to the Wicklow mountains. In this expedition we had two serious evils to contend with which it was impossible to overcome—constant bad

* I consider Mr. St. John a correct model of the old sportsman; his physical powers seem to be equal to any fatigue, and he does not mind roughing it in his night's lodgings in the Highlands. He is thoroughly *au fait* in the most delightful and exciting of all shooting, wild field sports. How exhilarating are the feelings of a keen sportsman when ranging with his dogs and gun in a wild country, with such bold and picturesque features as that of the Scottish Highlands, and when, perhaps, in a day's shooting a dozen different species of birds and animals, for example, here is what Mr. St. John bagged one year on the 21st of October: grouse six, partridges thirteen, woodcock one, pheasant one, wild-duck one, snipe four, teal one, curlew three, plover four, jack-snipe two, hares five, rabbits two.

† Grouse shooting does not commence in Ireland till the 20th.

weather and a scarcity of birds, and we returned to Carlow thoroughly disgusted with the Irish climate and the Wicklow mountains. I have been told that at the present time in Ireland the moor game is much better preserved, and for this object, poison for dogs is laid in the mountains before and immediately after the shooting season.* The burning of the heather is much practised in many of the grouse districts, and this operation is supposed by sportsmen to be beneficial to grouse, when it is performed at the proper season, and not injurious to their breeding.

* A case was heard before Sheriff Barclay at Perth, against a gamekeeper of the Lord Kinnaird, for poisoning a shepherd's dog. It appeared that the keepers were in the habit of laying hares and rabbits that had been saturated with nux vomica in the hedge-rows, by which a shepherd's dog had been killed. But as the charge could not be proved against the keeper, he was acquitted. The sheriff, pronouncing judgment, laid it down, that even supposing a dog were to trespass upon covert where game was kept, and was poisoned, the person who laid it down, and even the proprietor of the grounds, if he was aware of the practice, would be liable, in civil law, for the value of the animal.

CHAP. VIII.

THE PTARMIGAN. — WHERE FOUND. — PERIOD OF BREEDING. — TAKEN BY GREENLANDERS. — DESCRIPTION OF PTARMIGAN.

Ascending now the craggy rocks,
Where Ptarmigan are found in flocks,
These birds, possess'd of little sense,
To nature trust for their defence;
Their summer plumage scarcely shewn
Amongst the grey surrounding stone,
In winter, changed to dazzling white
'Midst snow, almost concealed from sight.

THE ptarmigan or white grouse is a bird that carefully avoids the rays of the sun, which animals and birds in general enjoy; they are only found towards the highest parts of the mountains, and in the winter form holes and burrows in the snow, where numbers lie close together as protection from the excessive cold. The ptarmigan are found but in small numbers on the Keswick hills in Cumberland, and some in the mountains in North Wales; but on the summits of the highest hills in the highlands of Scotland, and in the Hebrides and Orkneys they are numerous. They are also found on the hill of Ben Lawers, and on Benmore mountain,

near Loch Tay. Amongst these almost inaccessible heights you find them perched amongst the grey stones, and in the summer they so nearly resemble the colour of these stones, so as to make it rather difficult to distinguish the birds from them. Their flights are short and circuitous, and they never fly high. There is no difficulty in getting shots at the ptarmigan, as they lie close amongst the rocks and stones. As regards its own safety, it certainly may be considered as a stupid bird, for you may sometimes approach within three or four yards of it before it will take to flight. When the weather is unsettled with wind and rain, the ptarmigan are frequently shy and wild, and when disturbed, instead of lying closer, take quickly to flight, and by crossing some almost inaccessible ravine secure their safety. The ptarmigan is in my estimation rather an inferior bird to the grouse for the table. As I before stated, we frequently had them at the table-d'hôte at Bagnères de Bigorre, in the Pyrenees. I never had them at the hotels in Germany.

'In the winter the ptarmigan * will pack like the grouse. They derive their principal safety from the obstacles with which they are surrounded, for vigour and agile limbs and caution are absolutely necessary in the pursuit of these birds, and many young sportsmen, when they are satiated with killing grouse have recourse to this arduous exercise for the sake of variety in field-sports, and to send some of these birds as presents to their friends in the south. I have three stuffed ptarmi-

* It is mentioned in "Daniel's Rural Sports," that a friend of his shot in one day forty-three ptarmigan, above Loch Loggan, which lies between Daliwinnie and Fort Augustus; in this district he also found three whistling plover and dottrel.

gan sent to me by a friend from the north. One of them is in its summer plumage, another half changed, and the third a brilliant white. You at once see in the ptarmigan and the mountain hare, which change their colour in winter, the goodness of Providence in order to protect them from their enemies; for by their becoming white in the winter, and remaining during that season in the snowy regions, they are not conspicuous objects for the large birds of prey which hover over these mountain heights. The female lays from eight to ten eggs, about the size of a pigeon's, spotted with a reddish brown. These are deposited in the earth amongst the stones. The period of their breeding is about the end of May, or beginning of June. Their food consists of berries, buds of shrubs, young shoots of the pine and heath which grow in these elevated situations. The ptarmigan is found in great numbers in some of the northern countries of Europe. The Greenlanders have a singular way of taking the ptarmigan; they catch them in nooses hung to a long line drawn by men, who drop them over the necks of old birds. Of their skins, with the feathers placed next the body, a warm shirt is made; and the Greenland women used the black feathers of the tail formerly as ornaments to their head-dresses. In Russia, the feathers of the ptarmigan were formerly an article of commerce. This bird is fifteen inches in length, and weighs about nineteen ounces. The plumage is of a pale brown, or ash colour, elegantly crossed or mottled with small dusky spots, and minute bars. The head and neck are marked with broad bars of black, ash colour; and white. The belly and wings are white, but the shafts of the greater quill feathers black. In the male the grey colour predominates, except on the head

and neck, where there is a great mixture of red, with bars of white. The tail consists of sixteen feathers, the two middle of which are ash colour, mottled with black, and tipped with white. The two next black, slightly marked with white at the ends. The feathers incumbent on the tail are white, and almost entirely cover it. Their feet are clothed with feathers to the claws. The nails are long, broad, and hollow. The first, guards them from the rigour of the winter, the latter enables them to form a lodge among the snow.

CHAP. IX.

THE BLACK GROUSE. — MY FIRST SHOT AT A BLACK COCK. — HABITS OF THE BIRDS.

"If up a bonny black cock should spring,
To whistle him down wie' a slug in his wing,
And strap him down to my hengie shing.
Right seldom would I fail." — BURNS.

THE black grouse or black cock is found in various parts of Scotland, both in the highlands and lowlands, also in the southern counties of England and Wales, in Staffordshire, Sussex, and in the New Forest in Hampshire, and in the Western Counties. The male black cock when at its full growth and plumage is a noble bird, and weighs about four pounds. His length is twenty-two inches; the bill is dusky, and the plumage of the whole body black, glossed over on the neck and rump with a shining blue. The covers of the wings are of a dusky brown; the inner covers white; the thighs and legs are covered with dark brown feathers; the toes resemble those of the red game. The tail consists of sixteen black feathers, and is much forked; the exterior feathers bend gently outwards, and their ends seem as if cut off. The female weighs only two pounds, and its

length is one foot six inches. The head and neck are marked with alternate bars of red and black, the breast with dusky black and white. The back covers of the wings and tail are of the same colour as the neck, but the red is deeper. The tail is slightly forked; it consists of eighteen feathers, variegated with red and black. The feathers under the tail are white, marked with a few bars of black and orange.

This bird hatches its young rather late in the summer. It lays from four to eight eggs, of a dull yellowish-white colour, marked with numbers of very small ferruginous specks. The black cock was formerly considerably more numerous than at present in the New Forest, and was then strictly preserved as royal game. When the Chief Justice in Eyre grants his warrrant to persons to kill game in the Forest, the red and fallow deer and the black game are excepted. The Marquis of Anglesea has the wild and heathy part of his estate of Beaudesert, well stocked with black game. The first old black cock I ever shot was in Sussex, not more than five and thirty miles from London, and I really derived as much pleasure at looking at this fine specimen of game as I had felt when, a young sportsman, I shot my first partridge. In August 1820, I went with a gentleman, a friend of mine, who was a land agent, into Sussex, to the late Lord Somerville's, who had a considerable estate in that country, where the black game was preserved.* The tracts which come under the

* It is quite impossible to preserve black game unless you have a large and wild extent of country. This was in some degree the situation of this part of Sussex in 1820. The large tracts of ground that are now covered with gentlemen's grounds and farm-houses, and fields now under cultivation, were then wild heath covered plains, and afforded a safe

description of mere wastes, however, are very extensive. They occupy the northern side of the country. It is computed that these deserted tracts contain not less than 110,000 acres, some parts of which, are as wild and picturesque as some of the moors in Scotland, and it is in this tract of land, parts of which have been brought into cultivation, and in these heaths and valleys, the latter of which are well watered, that the black game is found. Lord Delaware, who resides at Buckhurst, has a paramountship, or right of sporting over a great extent of this wild district, excepting on those parts which are private property. We remained for a few days at the house of my friend's sister-in-law, and during this period, I had some very tolerable shooting; but we found the black game shy and wild, at which we were much surprised, as we were the only sportsmen who commenced shooting on the above estate on the 20th of August. On the first day I counted eleven black cocks that were together, out of shot, and took so long a flight that we could never find them again, and if we had not found some young birds the last day or two, we should have felt much dissatisfied with our ill success. The first shot I got was at the black cock mentioned above. He lay well to the dogs in some high and rough sedgy cover. I think the black cock flies much like the wild duck, and therefore is an easy

refuge for the black game which were not introduced until about seventy years ago. Besides, at that time, the covers were quiet, there being no fox-hounds in the country. But as soon as gentlemen took a fancy to this country and began to enclose, black game began to decrease and are now scarce. They are very shy birds, and if much disturbed, forsake their haunts. If you have not extensive fir plantations, and a large part of heath tract, as the Earls of Liverpool and Abergavenny, that are seldom disturbed, you cannot preserve these birds.

shot. Neither the black game nor the ptarmigan are found in Ireland.

The food of the black game is various, such as the bilberry and other mountain berries, and in winter, the tops of the heath. During the summer they may sometimes be seen feeding in the corn fields, and if there are any stone walls near the cultivated land some may be seen perched on them keeping a sharp look out to avoid danger.

The black game never pair, but in the spring the male birds collect together in elevated situations on the heath, when at this time they crow and clap their wings. On the females hearing these signals, they attend the summons. In this season they are very quarrelsome, and will fight together like game cocks, and he who proves himself strongest and gains the victory keeps off his rivals from the female birds. When engaged in these love affairs, they lose sight of danger, and will allow persons to approach them. The hen takes little pains in making the nest on the ground, but when she goes to feed covers her eggs with great care. The male poults quit their mother at the beginning of winter, and may be seen during that season in flocks of eight or ten. During that time they resort to the woods, if there should be any, but always give a preference to wild uncultivated grounds, where there is a good cover of heath sedges and a variety of low under-cover. They are also partial to moist situations in the summer. In their early plumage they resemble the female; not acquiring the black colour until the end of autumn, which they then always retain. An old sportsman makes the following remarks respecting black game: "The broods of black grouse are not found in

tall ling, but chiefly in marshy ground mixed with the candleberry myrtle (sweet gale). In these places are also found snipes, and between the two the dogs and the shooter are often deceived. From thence they run into the ling, and then along the edges of fir or birch wood or corn ground. The old black cocks are frequently found by the side of the hills in the long ling, at some distance from cover, and we once found seven together in very deep ling on the edge of the beautiful lake Loch-Awe, belonging to the Earl of Breadalbane; six of these birds were killed. Another time, when shooting in company with the Marquis of Lorn, eighteen were seen together, but were so wild that there was no possibility of getting near them." These birds will live and thrive in menageries, but have never been known to breed in a confined state. It is a curious fact that cherries and pease are fatal to black game.

CHAP. X.

CAPERCAILZIE. — DESCRIPTION OF CAPERCAILZIE. — MALE BIRD EASILY APPROACHED IN THE PAIRING SEASON. — ONE SEEN BY AUTHOR IN GERMANY.

"Return to our woods, capercailzie, again
E'en their snows* could once form thee a bed,
The sportsman may seek thee, but seek thee in vain.
Ah! why are the golden times fled,
From the pine's gloomy crest, when thine amorous lay
Low murmur'd at dawning or setting of day."—J. PITMAN.

As the capercailzie or cock of the wood was formerly found in some parts of the United Kingdom, and has within a few years been again introduced into Scotland by the Marquis of Breadalbane, into his extensive forest and fir plantations in Perthshire, I think it will be proper to give some account of this large and noble bird, which is found in considerable numbers in the forests of Germany, Sweden, and Russia. Many of them may be seen in the winter for sale in the poulterers' shops in London, imported from these countries—formerly in ice, which is not now required, in consequence of the passage being made more rapidly by steam vessels.

* Mr. Lloyd observed that when the snow is loose and soft the capercailzie not unfrequently buries itself beneath the surface during the night.

The cock of the wood feeds chiefly on the cones of the fir trees, and on plants and berries, more especially that of the juniper: at certain seasons this food renders the flesh too strong to be palatable, and as regards the table, it is certainly an inferior bird to the black cock or the grouse, but it has this advantage from its size, that it makes an important figure on the dinner table. The capercailzie is nearly the size of the turkey, is 2 feet 8 or 9 inches in length; 3 feet 10 inches in breadth, and weighs from 12 to 15 lbs. The bill of the male is of a dusky brown colour, very strong, and convex; the irides of the eyes are hazel, and over the eye is a naked red skin; the nostrils are small and covered with short dusky feathers, which extend under the throat, and these are black and much longer than the rest; the head and neck are ash colour, elegantly marked with transverse narrow blackish lines; the feathers at the setting on of the wings are white; the breast of a very glossy blackish green; the rest of the under parts black, but the belly and feathers over the thighs and vent are marked with a few white spots; the tail consists of eighteen black feathers, which in the outward ones are marked with a few white spots; the sides are marked as the neck; the legs are very strong, covered with brown feathers, and the edges of the toes pectinated.

The female differs widely in its plumage, and excels the male in the beauty and variety of its colours, rarely found to be the case in birds; it is only 26 inches in length. The bill is dusky, and the throat orange-red; head, neck, and back are marked with transverse bars of orange-red and black; the breast has some white spots upon it, and the lower part is of a plain orange colour, the belly barred with plain orange colour

and black, and the tips of the feathers white; scapulars black, the edges of the feathers mottled with black and pale reddish-brown; the scapulars tipped with white, the inner web of the quills dusky, the exterior mottled with dusky and pale brown; the tail is of a deep rust colour, barred with black, tipped with white, and consists of sixteen feathers, and when the bird spreads out its tail the white forms a circle round it. This bird, when feeding on the cones of the fir-tree, will sometimes strip one fir of all cones, and leave the adjacent fir untouched, which evidently proves that it is an epicure in the choice of this kind of food.

The males and females are not found together except from the beginning of February, the time of pairing, when the male morning and evening places himself on an eminence, or perches on the branch of a tree, when, with tail spread, the wings trailing almost to his feet, the scarlet patch on each side of the head assuming a deeper dye, his neck protruded, and the head feathers ruffled, he makes a noise not unlike the whetting of a scythe, which he repeats every now and then so loud as to be heard at a considerable distance. This call the females attend, and he continues it to the end of March. At this time he is so unguarded about his safety that he is easily approached within shot, and many of them are then killed by the German Jägers. It has been said that both males and females are so negligent of their safety during this amorous season, that peasants have been known to take them in their hands. This I can hardly credit. When a cock has been shot, the female has been heard to issue the most plaintive notes for its loss. The female lays from eight to sixteen eggs, eight at first, and more as

they grow older; they are of a white colour spotted with yellow, bigger than those of the common hen, and are esteemed greater delicacies than the eggs of most birds. These are deposited upon moss in some dry spot upon the ground, where she can sit in security, the female alone sitting the whole time of incubation, and when obliged to leave her nest covering the eggs cautiously with leaves. She sits so close that, after being approached, she can hardly be induced to quit her eggs. The young run after their mother as soon as hatched, the mother leading them most carefully into the woods, where she feeds them with ant eggs, small insects, blackberries, &c. As they grow older they feed upon the tops of heather and the pine cones, and being a hardy bird, and usually finding abundance of food, they soon come to their full strength and vigour. They continue united, more particularly the young males, until the end of the year, when the season of love inspiring them with new inclinations and appetites the family disperses.

In the countries where they abound, if taken young, they may be easily tamed, and thrive well on corn; and the males, when in this domestic state, emit the same amorous note all the year round, which, when wild, they only use in the season of love.

The Goshawk is their most formidable enemy; they succumb to its attack, although they are much larger birds.

When I resided in Germany I was never so fortunate as to get a shot at the cock of the wood; but on one occasion, when walking through a forest in the Duchy of Brunswick with some Germans, they pointed out to me one that was perched on the branch of a pine-tree,

not distant more than forty yards. Unluckily we had no guns, and I suspect that he would not have allowed us to approach so near to him had we been armed.

A brace of capercailzie may be considered a capital day's sport, and a tolerably heavy weight to carry for six or seven hours.

Pennant, in his "Tour in Scotland," says that "in the Chisholm's district, that rare bird the cock of the wood is still to be met with, probably in those near Castle Grant;" and he speaks of one, a male, which he had seen, which was killed in Mr. Chisholm's wood north of Inverness was the last bird of this kind found there, and of the nest being placed in a Scotch pine. This must be a mistake, as naturalists all agree that this bird makes her nest on the ground. The capercailzie was formerly found in Ireland, but is now extinct there.

CHAP. XI.

THE HARE. — FORM OF EYES AND EARS WELL PLACED FOR ITS PROTECTION. — FASCINATED WHEN PURSUED BY STOAT OR WEASEL. — WEIGHT OF HARES. — HARES VERY PROLIFIC. — ENEMIES OF HARE. — CURIOUS OLD FRENCH RECIPE FOR DRESSING A HARE.

"One sheltered hare
Has never heard the sanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes,
Innocent pasture of my peaceful home,
Whom ten long years' experience of my care,
Has made at last familiar; she has lost
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes — thou mayest eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee; thou mayest frolic on the floor
At evening, and at night retire secure
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarmed;
For I have gained thy confidence, have pledged
All that is human in me to protect
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.
If I survive thee, I will dig thy grave,
And, when I place thee in it, sighing say,
I knew at least one hare that had a friend." *—COWPER.

I SHALL not enter into a general description of the hare, which is so well known, but merely point out

* Memorandum found among Mr. Cowper's papers: — "Tuesday, March 9th, 1786: — This day died poor puss, aged eleven years, eleven months. She died between twelve and one at noon, of mere old age, and apparently without pain."

those parts of his frame bestowed on him by Providence to secure him from the dangers by which he is surrounded both from man, birds of prey, and vermin. The ears of this animal are formed for conveying sound at a great distance, and whether the sound comes sideways, straight, before or behind, these useful organs give timely notice to this timid animal. Another great advantage which the hare has in running, is the muscular strength of his legs, particularly the hind ones, which are considerably longer than the fore-legs; and I have often seen, on the downs in Dorsetshire, a hare in the month of March run up a steep hill, without being once turned by a brace of well-bred greyhounds. This animal is so fully aware of this advantage, that on being started, it will instantly make for any rising ground that may be near him. The eyes of the hare are large, and situated in the upper part of the head, and so protuberant as to enable her when in her form to see all around her; they are kept constantly open when awake or asleep, the lid being too short to cover them. There is little doubt, that, although the hare possesses considerable expanse of sight, they are not able to enjoy an equally distant one. When hunted by harriers, or coursed by greyhounds, this general vision of the eye is most useful to her, particularly when pursued by greyhounds, as it warns her to make the various twists and turns, by which she frequently escapes being seized by the dogs, and at last reaches some hedge or cover, secure from danger. The feet of the hare are well protected by a thick hairy covering, which in very dry or frosty weather gives her a considerable advantage over the dogs pursuing her, from its having less scent; as young hares tread heavier than those that are full grown, the scent is stronger. Hares during the daytime

rarely quit their forms; but in the evening, and at night, come out to feed, and generally return to the usual haunt through the same runs. When pursued by a stoat or a weasel, the hare appears in some measure fascinated by fear, and does not betake itself to its best means of escape — its fleetness of feet — from its great enemy, and which it always has recourse to when pursued by greyhounds or harriers, or even a fox; on the contrary, it hops in a sluggish sort of way on the near approach of the stoat or weasel, which seems possessed of a sort of charm, like that of the rattlesnake and other species of those reptiles, who exercise the same over birds and small animals, by keeping their eye steadfastly fixed on their victim. One can only account for this extraordinary feeling in the animal by attributing it to extreme terror. The constant terror and alarm which haunts the hare, will sufficiently account for its being always lean, and in this state best adapted for escaping from many of its formidable enemies by its fleetness. The colour of the hare being a near approach to the soil, conceals her from the sight of her enemies; and the hare trusts much to this concealment, for they sit so close in their forms that a person may frequently walk within two or three yards of them without their moving. Providence has protected the mountain hare of Scotland, and those of Northumberland and Cumberland, by changing, in the winter, the fur from brown to white; thus whilst they lie in their forms, surrounded by snow, they escape the vigilant eyes of the birds of prey, more especially those of the eagle and the larger species of falcons.*

* In the winter of 1856 a black hare was shot on Sir Edward Kerrison's estate in Suffolk, which he sent to the Ipswich Museum.

Mr. Daniel mentions a curious instance of a hare being killed in Sandpit Wood, in the parish of Terling, Essex. In one of the paths, by directing all her attention and sight towards some foxhounds that were drawing a cover, a hare at full speed met and ran against a terrier, who was hastening to the cry with equal velocity. Both animals were apparently killed. The dog with some difficulty was recovered; but the hare's skull was fractured to pieces. The general weight of a hare is about seven or eight pounds and a half, but they are sometimes met with in England, particularly the wood hares, weighing ten pounds. Whilst at Frankfort on the Maine, I had one sent me as a present that weighed nearly eleven pounds. It is generally considered that hares are larger and stronger in proportion to the coldness of the climate they inhabit. Hares are very destructive to flower gardens, and are particularly fond of pinks and parsley. In the county of Suffolk, a gentleman found that his hares were so destructive to some of his new plantations, that he gave an order to have them destroyed, and the number which was known to be killed amounted to 1084.* Hares do not pair, but the male pursues the female by his acute sense of smelling; and, as I before mentioned, the gamekeepers should be careful to keep down the jack-hares, as they fight furiously, and torment the female. In a mild winter, they breed nearly the whole year. The female brings

* At Sir Maurice Berkeley's manor at Cranford, Lord Panmure shot in January 1858, standing in the same spot, and within the space of five minutes, twice killed a brace of hares at one shot, and on each occasion both hares had quitted the covert, and were running at the top of their speed, but in close proximity, down a ride. A double event which has rarely happened to any sportsman under similar circumstances.

forth her young in one month, in number generally two, sometimes three, but rarely four. The mother suckles them about three weeks: after that period they procure their own nourishment, making their forms near each other. Daniel says—"As a proof of the great increase of hares, a male and female, the doe pregnant, were shut up in a walled garden, and proper plants supplied for their sustenance; at the expiration of twelve months the garden was examined, and the produce was fifty-seven hares, including the original parents." Hares live seven or eight years, and come to maturity in less than one. A young hare may be easily known by the facility with which the under jaw-bone is broken: when the ears tear easily that is also a proof of its being young.

Most sportsmen are aware of the many doubles which the hare cunningly makes before she enters her form early in the morning. Hares, when closely pursued, will take to the water, and there are instances where they have been seen, on these occasions, to take to the sea. Wood hares have a stronger scent than those that are found in the fields. They never drink, but content themselves with the dew.

The English are sometimes far too anxious to adopt the customs and habits of our continental neighbours, and this, I think, peculiarly applies to the present mode of battue shooting. But in the extensive forests and woods abroad, many of which are well stocked with wild boar, wolves, stag, fallow-deer, roebuck, and small game, there can be no doubt that this battue shooting is the only course to be adopted to ensure success in the killing of the above game. In some parts of Germany, the Lord Paramount, or Lord of the Manor, has still the feudal right of calling out at certain

times, two or three hundred of the peasantry to beat his forests and woods. I have been at these battues many years ago in the kingdom of Hanover. In France where all the feudal rights have been abrogated by the national convention, the proprietor of a wood or forest is able to have his battue by paying the peasants a small sum, although I believe the Préfet has the power of calling out part of the population of the communes to beat the forest for the destruction of wolves when they become too numerous and destructive to the farmer's cattle.

For the table, I consider the mountain and hill hare preferable to the wood and field hares. They are certainly not in general so large, but as they travel a considerable distance for their food, their flesh is more firm and of a better flavour. When hares and rabbits feed in pastures which have been recently flooded, they are very apt to die of the disease called the rot. A friend of mine has lately found in such a moist situation, a considerable number of hares and rabbits dead of this disease.

There are two very formidable enemies of the hare—poachers and vermin. A gamekeeper must keep a sharp look out on the former, especially examining the runs of the hare in the hedgerows and other frequented paths in the woods, where the poacher is most likely to set his snares, as in many villages there are found men of this description, who are *au fait* at this part of the poaching system, but who do not venture to shoot pheasants on the perch at night. The gamekeeper should also constantly keep his traps set, especially during the breeding season of the vermin, when the polecat, stoat, and weasel, are diligently employed foraging for their young ones. I am fully aware it would be high treason against pug, who, from his cunning and agility, and excellent nose,

takes uncommon care to have his larder well supplied with food for the sustenance of his young family; however, I really think, as an old sportsman, that a gentleman may have a sufficient stock of game both for the amusement of himself and friends, and at the same time may ensure to the foxhunters that they would scarcely ever have a blank day in his covers. The domestic cat, whenever he has imbibed a taste for the fields and woods, destroys a great number of leverets in the breeding season. To cure him of this propensity, the owner should have his ears cut close when young, as that animal has a great dislike to water getting into them.

In an old French book on sporting, written by a French nobleman, the following curious recipe for dressing an old hare is thus given:—"The dish is one which I invented after having killed a hare one day in Lent, which hare was so old and so dry, that it was impossible to separate the ears with the hand, although we endeavoured to do so several times. In order to make it tender, the idea struck me only to paunch it, and immediately afterwards to put it on the spit without skinning it, heating two shovels red hot; and to economise the bacon, I cut two slices of it as if for larding, and fastened them with thread to two laths, passing the thread between the rind and the fat of it, in order that it should not burn, and when my hare's skin was dry enough, I set it on fire with a firebrand. The fur being burnt, I took one of the heated shovels, and put the bacon against the hare, making it drop upon it, and continued with the shovels, which were heated one after the other, till I saw that the skin was separating from the body, and then I could take it off easily with the tongs, (which may also be done by the hand,) and after

having detached it, I basted it again with the bacon, and afterwards with strong vinegar, and seeing it roasted enough, I made a sauce, which may be made sweet, or *à la poivrade*, according to taste. This hare, old and hard as it was before being roasted, was more tender than a leveret kept three days, from which on cutting it, gravy ran out as from a leg of mutton, for being tough and dry are two things which cause roast hare to be bad. And after being thoroughly experienced in this cooking the late king, Louis XIII., ordered me one Twelfth-night at Versailles, to dress him a hare, which had just been taken, and fit to make the trial, being very old and very tough. He was also curious to see it roasted in the kitchen. His Majesty found it so tender and excellent, as also did those who had the honour of dining with him, that nothing remained but the bones. I give this recipe," continues the Frenchman, "that sportsmen, when they have taken a hare in the country, and go for their refreshment to a poor public-house, where nothing is to be had, may speedily prepare a dinner, and return immediately to their sport."

CHAP. XII.

RABBITS.—DOG TAX IN IRELAND.—BREEDING OF RABBITS.—WORM IN RABBIT.—INJURY TO FARMERS.—FARMING IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

"From rabbits young, from rabbits old,
From rabbits hot, from rabbits cold,
From rabbits tender, rabbits tough,
Thank you, my lord, I've had enough."

Grace of a Nobleman's Chaplain.

I WILL now speak about a small animal which has been the cause, I verily believe, of more bad feeling and disputes between landlord and tenant than all the game put together—I mean the rabbit. Its habits are very mischievous to the agriculturist and to gentlemen's woods and plantations, more especially in a severe winter. I wish to be understood that this great mischief to cultivated lands and woods, takes place only, when gentlemen, by means of their gamekeepers, allow these prolific animals (or indeed they almost deserve the name of vermin) to overstock the woods and fields, and most gentlemen know well that when a keeper receives encouragement from his master to keep up a great stock of rabbits, he is never backward in doing this. For, as I have observed in another part of this work, these men are very apt to consider the rabbits as their perquisite,

to contribute to the food of their family, or to sell them.

The material difference between the hare and rabbit is, that the former usually takes a wide range for his food, whilst the latter is local, and excepting when asleep, is actively employed, both with his feet and teeth, in burrowing in hedgerows and other elevated grounds, and at times doing considerable mischief to the drainage, and the barking of trees in the woods. The rabbit is an animal that cannot bear the extreme of cold, therefore, in the northern parts of Europe, in Sweden, Poland, and Russia, they are kept in hutches, or barges, and fattened for the table. The Germans have a great dislike to the flesh of this animal; they consider it tasteless and insipid, and although I have lived several years in Germany, I never recollect seeing a rabbit brought to the table-d'hôte. In the western parts of Europe, rabbits generally abound, and there is certainly no scarcity of them in the United Kingdom, which is fully proved by the vast numbers killed at some of the battues. In many parts of England, particularly in Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, where large tracts of the land are sandy, they are very numerous, and the proprietors of warrens in these parts of England derive a considerable annual profit from the immense numbers sent for the supply of the London market. In Yorkshire there are also many warrens, from which York and other considerable towns of the vicinity are supplied with rabbits, and the skins sold to furriers, who furnish the hat manufactories with their fur. There are also some rabbit warrens in the west of Ireland, belonging to the Marquis of Coningham and M'Connolly and others in the neigh-

bourhood of Londonderry, who supply the Liverpool markets; now that steam communication is established between Belfast and this port, rabbits at Londonderry are sold for one shilling a couple. What is rather singular, I shot for two years in the counties of Carlow and Waterford, about forty-five years ago, and to the best of my reollection I never saw a wild rabbit during that period, rarely a hare, and very few partridges, but I had excellent woodcock and snipe shooting. However, this is not to be wondered at, as at that period the Irish game laws were not enforced, and every man who possessed a dog and gun went out shooting — little notice being taken whether or not he had a game certificate, the price of which was inconsiderable compared to that paid in England. There is no dog tax in Ireland, and it is stated by a gentleman, that when the curs become too numerous in his neighbourhood, he gives orders to his gamekeeper to diminish the number by some doses of strychnine. The Irish gentlemen now take a greater interest in the preservation of their game, and in some counties the sportsman will find no scarcity of pheasants, partridges, or hares.

To accomplish this object the gamekeepers are well paid, the head keeper being sometimes a native of Norfolk or Suffolk, who is skilful in the destruction of vermin. Some gentlemen, who preserve their grouse on the mountains, have poison laid for the purpose of destroying the dogs of poachers; this I think rather a dangerous expedient, as the gamekeeper may sometimes forget where he has placed the poison, in consequence of which his master may lose some valuable dogs; besides, the lower class of Irish are very revengeful, and if any of their dogs become the victims of this poison

they will probably retaliate by doing the same on these grouse preserves. Within the last few years the great diminution by famine and emigration of the population of Ireland, will, if I mistake not, contribute much to the increase of game. Many noblemen and gentlemen have removed from their estates squatters who rented an acre or half an acre as potato ground, and have adopted the same system as in England, in getting respectable tenants who have a sufficient capital to stock a farm of 200 or 300 acres. In short, it is fair to calculate that in the course of twenty years, with railroads, the general system of drainage, and the rapid communication by steam between England and Ireland, the face of this fertile island will be greatly improved, and the lower class of Irish become more enlightened, and less under the control of their priests.

There can be no objection to a gentleman keeping up a moderate stock of rabbits; for in cover and in furze, where small rides are kept open and in hedge-rows, the shooting of them is exciting and enlivening. The speed with which a rabbit runs for a short distance requires, on these occasions, that the sportsman should take a quick aim, and with much practice in this sort of shooting he usually becomes an excellent snap shot. There is another and no small advantage to be derived from having a moderate stock of rabbits in the woods, the slaughter of pheasants and hares is considerably less, and they tell well in a day's sporting. A late connexion of mine who was a first-rate shot at rabbits in cover, told me that he frequently shot them without seeing the object when he fired, by getting a glimpse of the direction they took, and firing into a small bush or low cover.

Rabbits breed at about six months old, and usually bear seven times annually, if the winter has been mild. They generally have about five young ones at a time, which shows plainly how soon an estate would be overstocked were they not constantly kept down by shooting and trapping, ferreting, and by their various enemies, both of the feathered and four-footed tribes, amongst the latter particularly Reynard.*

The buck rabbits in the warrens will kill the young ones if they can get at them; but, to prevent this, the does cover their stocks or nests with gravel or earth, which they close so artificially with the hinder part of their bodies, that it is difficult to find them out. The same plan is adopted when they have their burrows in hedge-rows. The female frequently makes a hole in a ploughed field, which is termed a rabbit stop; a warm nest is made from the fur pulled off from her breast, and when she quits her stop she carefully covers over the mouth of the burrow, and this is performed with such skill, that it is no easy matter to discover the opening. They never suckle their young at any other time than early in the morning and late at night, and

* A complaint was made to the Belgian Chamber of Representatives from the inhabitants of La Hulpe, praying the Government to adopt some measure for the destruction of the rabbits in the Forest of Soignes, belonging to the State, which are represented to be so numerous as to cause considerable injury to the persons having property in the neighbourhood. The Minister of Finance said that applications had been already made on the subject, and that Government would take measures to prevent the increase of the evil complained of. The breeding of rabbits has, during the last five or six years, assumed a great extension in Belgium. Every week not fewer than 50,000 are sent to England from Ghent, Eccloo, Thielt, &c. In Ghent also an extensive business is done in preparing rabbit-skins for exportation to France, Russia, and America.

always for ten or twelve days close up the hole at the mouth of the nest in the above manner, when they leave their young; after this they begin to leave a small opening, which they increase by degrees, till at length, when they are about three weeks old, the mouth of the hole is left wholly open that they may go out, as they are then of sufficient size to take care of themselves. Rabbits, both wild and tame, are subject to two diseases; one called the rot, the other is a sort of madness; this may be known by their wallowing and tumbling about; the tape worm also is sometimes found in their inside. A friend of mine has some rich pasture lands on the banks of the Thame in Oxfordshire, which are frequently flooded by this river. After the water has subsided the grass grows in the spring, summer, and autumn with increased fertility. When the hares and rabbits feed on these fields so submerged many of them are found dead from the rot. This was the case in the winter of 1857, when I was staying at this gentleman's house. This, I think, may be easily accounted for by the grass having imbibed too much moisture from the flood, as it is well known that this disease is very general in wet summers, and fatal to these animals, excepting in very light and gravelly soils. A gentleman writes in "The Field" newspaper in 1857, "That when paying a visit to a respectable farmer near Tedworth, in the county of Hants, there is a considerable extent of waste ground in the immediate neighbourhood, known as Balford Lea, and the above sheep walk was intersected by a belt of furze in which rabbits abounded. My friend, the owner of a farm abutting on the spot, proposed to me his intention of shooting off and otherwise destroying the rabbits in the vicinity, observing that they did

incalculable injury to his crops, more particularly so to the corn when in the young blade. We, accordingly, entered upon the adventure, which afforded us admirable sport, and in the course of three successive days, with double-barrelled guns, we managed to kill upwards of six dozen of the furry nuisances; but the most remarkable fact connected with this event was, that upon opening a dozen of the above animals with a view to paunch them, to render them lighter to carry, in no less than ten cases out of twelve, I was surprised to discover the internal organs affected with a peculiarly looking parasitical worm of a white complexion, which adhered with some degree of tenacity to the exterior surfaces of the liver, spleen, paunches, and intestines of the rabbits. The form of this worm was similar to that of a small leech when quite contracted. I counted fifteen of these unseemly looking vermin in the ventral portions of one single rabbit." *

Some persons course rabbits with small beagles. I once went out in my younger days, on foot, with a pack of rabbit beagles, belonging to some farmer in Dorsetshire; the meet was on a large furze common, and most of the burrows had been stopped up during the night. We had excellent sport, and killed a considerable number of rabbits. We had about ten couples of these handsome little hounds, and it was quite gratifying to see how they stuck to the scent of a rabbit which they had started, although in the chase, which generally lasted ten or twelve minutes, other rabbits had crossed

* There was a field of white turnips growing on the confines of the lea; might not this circumstance have had some effect on the constitutional system of the rabbits. They were not emaciated, or in bad condition.

the scent. On this occasion one of the farmers treated us most hospitably, and we talked over the day's sport with as much glee and mirth as would old foxhunters after an excellent run. I had at this time a troop in the Scots Greys, and was quartered at Dorchester. There is no pastime that boys are more partial to than going ferreting during the holidays. This is done with ferrets and purse nets. The ferret's mouth should be muzzled to prevent his killing the rabbits. The ferret is then sent into the hole to drive them out, but the purse nets being spread over the opening of the holes, the rabbit, to avoid his dangerous enemy, plunges into them, and is made captive; a bag net may be placed at a short distance from the burrows, so that very few will escape. I have heard that in some warrens the warreners have resorted to the cruel practice of sewing up loosely the mouths of the ferrets before they turn them into the rabbit burrows, but I believe the more general way of taking rabbits is by trapping.

Rabbits will occasionally, if much alarmed, take to the water. As a proof of this, a gentleman was shooting near Biddeford, in December 1857, on the banks of the Torridge, when the spaniels drove a rabbit out of a plantation, but did not chase it; still bunny was alarmed, and, under this fear, braved the perils of the deep, by deliberately swimming into the river, and gallantly going a distance of 200 yards to the other side, when she got into safe quarters. The Prefect of one of the departments of France, in 1857, authorised the proprietors of woods, and the lessees of the right of sporting in the royal forests and the communes, to make two *battues* per week for the destruction of rabbits, and other animals that do injury to the crops, and permitted the sale

of them up to April 15th. A similar permission in all the departments would be of great benefit to the French farmers, and perhaps something of the same kind may be sanctioned by the legislature of this country, from the vast increase of game on the large estates of noblemen and gentlemen. It is really fearful to think of the damage that must be sustained on the estates of the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, when we learn that his lordship and eleven of his friends shot in six days 3636 rabbits.* It is fair to state that Lord Stamford is most liberal of his game, and that his friends and tenants are amply supplied with it, and a great number of the poor in the neighbourhood have the rabbits distributed to them. I would defy any land surveyor, or first rate farmer, to be able to make a just estimate of the losses sustained by the tenants from this enormous quantity of game, when it is left to arbitration to fix the amount of compensation to be allowed to the tenant for the serious damage done to his crops. I verily believe that in nine times out of ten both parties are dissatisfied by the arbitration, the landlord thinking it too much, and the tenant too little, for money will scarcely compensate a good, zealous, and active farmer for the deterioration of his crops, chiefly by hares and rabbits; but when we find 2461 pheasants have been shot in a week, it is fair to conclude that these birds must have had a tolerable share in the injury of the crops of wheat, barley, and oats; for all sportsmen know that they frequent the standing corn in

* Subjoined is a list of the game killed by this party in the above period. Total of pheasants, 2461; partridges, 17; hares, 349; rabbits, 3636; woodcocks, 81; snipes, 23; wild ducks, 12; various, 81; total, 6660! In no preserve in England has, I believe, so large a quantity of game been killed in six days.

the summer time, and help themselves pretty freely to the grain, and as they are large birds, trample down much of the corn.

I mentioned the other day to a keen sportsman, who prefers the old fashioned style of shooting, the great quantity killed on Lord Stamford's property, on which he remarked, "You may go there with a double-barrelled gun, shut your eyes, and fire off at random, and you would be almost sure to bag a brace of some sort of game." A gentleman, that I am most intimate with, a shrewd, and particularly well-informed man, observed to me, that he considered that the present English nobility generally were now their own land-agents, and that the characteristic hospitality and liberality which formerly distinguished this aristocratic class, is not, in these times often found to exist.

Noblemen and gentlemen of large fortunes now sell their venison, their game, and their rabbits, and some send the produce of their hothouses, such as grapes, pine apples, melons, peaches, and other rare fruit to Covent Garden and other markets; and it is well known that a nobleman of immense fortune sends in the summer time most of his common fruits and vegetables to a fruiterer in a county town. These dealings were certainly never practised formerly by men of rank and fortune. *Multa petentibus desunt multa.*

Many years ago I had some excellent shooting with a gentleman in Oxfordshire; the estate was small, chiefly pasture land, with thick hedge-rows. The rabbits were numerous, and our shooting was nearly confined to this sport, as he had only one small cover near his house, in which he had a few pet pheasants, held sacred, except on the last day or two of pheasant shooting; but I

enjoyed much this rabbit shooting, although there was little variety, excepting that we now and then got a hare. We were constantly kept on the alert by the lively spaniels bolting the rabbits from each side of the hedge, and affording capital shots, as they scampered over the grass, and my friend, who was a most hospitable man, crowned our day's shooting with an excellent dinner and wines of the finest quality.

Some years after the long protracted war with the French republic and the Emperor Napoleon, I sheathed my sword and retired to some landed property in Cambridgeshire, and, like many unwise military and naval men*, took to farming; and this at a very unlucky time for agriculturists, as a considerable change for the worse had taken place in the price of the products of the land, which had fallen from war prices to those of peace. The farm I cultivated might certainly be termed rather a large one, consisting of 700 acres, all arable, except between seventy or eighty acres in the park. With a full conviction, that with the little knowledge and experience I had in farming, and my fondness for field sports, I should be certainly unable to manage so large a concern, I took into my service a very honest and respectable old bailiff, who was so fat that I was obliged to keep a horse for him. His salary was 100*l.* per

* I once sailed in the flag-ship of an admiral who had been appointed to a considerable command, and hoped that he might retrieve his fortune, having, by the building of a country house and farming for several years, managed to get rid of 25,000*l.* prize money, which he had made during the war. I was much pleased to hear afterwards (for he was an excellent, good-natured man) that by his share of the freight of money, carried by men-of-war at this period, he had made 20,000*l.* during the time he had this command. Now all these freights are conveyed by steamers to foreign parts and our colonies.

annum, and during harvest time he lived at the house, and on this occasion was allowed a pint of wine a day, which were the terms on which he had formerly been employed as bailiff. This, of course, would considerably diminish the profits of the farm, and the balance at the end of two seasons was not by any means in my favour, and I got thoroughly tired of my farming speculation. Perhaps this may be a wholesome lesson to naval and military men whose minds may be seized with an ardent taste for turning their swords into ploughshares, and I certainly had not the satisfaction of feeling *Labor ipse voluptas. Mais retournons à nos lapins.* My bailiff came to me one day with a long face, to complain that the rabbits were doing great damage to a piece of wheat of forty acres. They were certainly numerous on about four acres of sand hills, covered with large furze, which I preserved to have occasionally a day's rabbit shooting with my friends. This was a few hundred yards from the wheat, and as it was during the night that the rabbits committed these ravages, a council of war was held between the bailiff, the head ploughman, and myself, when it was decided that some of the furze should be cut, and small fires made every night at certain distances along the side of the field towards the rabbit warren. This had the desired effect in scaring the enemy from the wheat. I now entertained a sanguine hope that I should have my four quarters an acre from the field; but, alas! I was sadly disappointed in this expectation, for a blight or smut attacked the ears of corn, and I got little or nothing but the straw as manure. Such was the sweet solace for all my old bailiff's labour.

There are three persons in a country establishment

who each have some degree of interest in keeping up a plentiful stock of rabbits on the estate. The gamekeeper I consider the first of the class, the lady of the house the second, and the third the cook. I have already stated convincing reasons why the gamekeeper is unwilling to shoot or trap these mischievous animals, except for himself. The lady of the house* is anxious to have them, as they contribute so greatly to the supply of the family; and the cook, for the sake of the skin, which, in the season, are worth three pence each. But the gentleman's wife has a very faint idea of the damage done by the rabbits to her husband's woods and plantations, more especially in a severe winter, when they bark the trees.†

Having, described the mischievous effects of having a landed estate overstocked with rabbits, I will, as I think I am bound to do, say something in their favour. The manure of this animal, when collected in sufficient quantities, has been favourable to the crops on some lands. The late Mr. F——, who was esteemed one of the best practical gentleman farmers in England, and who, with the late Lord Somerville, introduced the merino sheep into this country, on account of the fine quality of their wool, had a large barn, every

* Excellent white soup is made from rabbits. Boiled rabbits with onions, or made into a curry, are favourite dishes; a roast rabbit comes in well for a second course, and rabbits, half-grown, cut up and fried with parsley and butter, are particularly palatable, to say nothing of rabbit pies for the parlour or the servants' hall.

† The tarred rope, which should be put round the lower part of the tree, would not require to be so high as that to protect them from the hares, particularly if there are few of the latter.

In a small property, Wheatley, in Oxfordshire, during the winter of 1857-58 one thousand rabbits were killed.

side of which was filled with rabbit hutches from top to bottom, all of them inhabited by silver-grey rabbits. A man was constantly employed in feeding and cleaning them, and the manure was found very beneficial, and several dozens were sent for sale every week to London, and that sort of skin being valuable, they fetched a good price in the market.

I have been rather prolix on the subject of rabbits, and perhaps, in my younger days, as a sportsman, I was not so zealous for their destruction. But I have heard on various occasions from farmers such bitter complaints of the mischievous tendency of rabbits, that I am become a decided enemy to their being protected in such numbers as to be a serious nuisance. Some sportsmen who are very fond of this sort of shooting will sarcastically remark, "Now the author is old and blind, and can no longer enjoy the sport, the poor rabbits fall under his lash."

CHAP. XIII.

WOODCOCK SHOOTING IN IRELAND, WALES, AND THE ISLAND OF TERCEIRA. — DESCRIPTION AND HABITS OF THE WOODCOCK. — BREED IN ENGLAND.

"O joy! the redwings now appear,
The harbinger of sport;
Sure sign the woodcocks will be here,
And to our woods resort.
Prepare your guns, ye sportsmen keen,
Straight powder good and dry,
For if a woodcock can be seen,
'Tis certain he must die."—J. P.

I AM now entering on a sporting subject which may be considered peculiarly interesting to the English sportsman. I come to this conclusion from my own feelings and the opinion of others, that with the exception of a good run with foxhounds there is nothing more exhilarating than in cover-shooting to hear the beater cry out, "Mark, cock!" and an instant afterwards making a successful shot at him. Independently of his being so excellent a bird for the table, there is something of wildness and excitement in woodcock shooting which is certainly not experienced to that degree in the slaughter of pheasants and hares and other game bred on your estate. The woodcock during the summer inhabits the alps of Norway, Sweden, Polish Prussia, and the northern parts of Europe. They retire from these countries at the beginning of winter, as soon as the frost commences,

which forces them to migrate into milder climates, where the ground being soft enables them to bore with their bills for worms and other insects, which form their chief nourishment.

The woodcock is about fifteen inches long, the breadth with the wings extended twenty-six inches, the bill three, dark towards the end, reddish at the base, and hollowed lengthways; the upper mandible hangs over the lower, and forms the round point of its bill, and nature has given an additional organ at this extremity, adapted to the mode of procuring its sustenance. The tip is rather flesh than horn, and appears susceptible of a sort of touch, calculated for detecting its prey in the moist earth. The tongue is slender, long, sharp, and hard; the eyes large and of a brilliant black colour, and placed near the top of the head, to prevent their being injured when the bird thrusts his bill into the ground. From the bill to the eye is a black line; the forehead is a reddish ash-colour; the crown of the head, the hind part of the neck, the back, the coverts of the wings, and the scapulars are prettily barred with a ferruginous red, black, and grey, but on the head the black predominates. The under eyelid is white, the chin ash-colour, the forepart of the neck yellowish, the under part of the body dirty-white, barred with numerous transverse dusky lines. The quill feathers are dusky, marked on the outer web with triangular rufous spots, and the same on the inner web close to the shaft. The tail consists of twelve feathers, dusky or black on the one web and marked on the other with red, the tips above ash-colour, below white, which to the full black eye gives to this bird a very pleasing appearance. The legs and toes are a pale flesh coloured brown, the latter divided almost entirely,

having only a very small web between the middle and interior toes.

Woodcocks generally arrive in flights in this country about the latter end of September or the beginning of October, but in much greater numbers in November, taking advantage of crossing the sea in a thick mist during the day, or at night.

It is the wind and not the moon which induces them to commence their flight. If the wind continues favourable when they arrive on the coast, their stay is very short, and they frequently continue their flight the next night, but if in crossing the sea they experience adverse winds, they generally remain a few days to rest themselves. They then separate and disperse. It has been observed by gamekeepers in Suffolk, that when the redwings and fieldfares arrive on that coast they are certain harbingers of the woodcock's arrival.

Frequently a considerable number of them are shot in different parts of our coasts on their first arrival, and before they have taken their various flights into the interior of the country. One cannot help regretting their being shot at this period, as they are then in poor condition, and not the fat plump bird which they become about Christmas, and it is curious that the taste of the woodcock on its first arrival is not so highly flavoured.

A woodcock, entirely white, was shot in Sussex by the gamekeeper of Sir John Lade; another, with the wings white, was shot by Mr. Goodyear, at Box, in Somersetshire.*

* On the 31st October 1847, Mr. George Gibbs of Bristol killed two woodcocks at one shot, both birds being on the wing.

My son, a captain in the Canadian Rifle Corps, saw a white woodcock shot by a Frenchman in the neighbourhood of Montreal.

When woodcocks first arrive in this country, you may sometimes find them in hedge-rows, furze, heath, and among small clumps of bushes, and two or three times I have found them in turnip fields. But they soon retire to the woods, and may at this time be frequently found in the low cover of one or two years' growth; but if the covers are often disturbed by sportsmen they take shelter in the high fells of ten or twelve years' growth. If the winter is mild, woodcocks remain in the mountains or high ground amongst the heath, and towards evening take their flight to their feeding places; but if the weather becomes severe they then descend to the low and marshy ground, where they are sometimes found in great numbers. The first time you flush a cock he flies lazily, and is an easy shot; but after they have been flushed two or three times, their flight becomes rapid even through the high cover, until they have arrived above it, and are enabled to fly horizontally. In their sharp twists and turns to accomplish this, the sportsman must be a quick and good shot to kill them. They are partial to lying near the outside of the high fell, and when found there they generally take their flight outside, and you get a clear good shot. If you have marked a woodcock down in a wood where the bottom is clear, you may be pretty certain that as soon as he has alighted he will run, and as these birds, as well as snipes, almost always fly against the wind, get a few yards to the windward of the bird, and when you have reached the position, whistle as a signal to the keeper or marker who is with you to flush him, when nine times out of ten he will fly towards you, and his fate is sealed. Woodcocks prefer lying in dry, clear covers, where they are able to run.

In Germany the jägers or gamekeepers kill a considerable number of woodcocks, by waiting in the even-

ings in the avenues or openings of the forests or woods, at which time these birds are on their flight seeking for their food in marshy or swampy places. If spaniels are well trained and under good command, I prefer shooting with them, but if this is not the case, men or boys to beat the cover, who keep close, are preferable, but there is certainly something exhilarating in shooting with spaniels.

During two years that I was on service in the south of Ireland as inspecting field officer of Yeomanry, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, in 1805, I had some excellent cock shooting in the county of Carlow, in the woods of Mr. Kavanagh of Burris, whose extensive covers lay on the left bank of the river Barrow with a south-west aspect. In these woods the arbutus, holly, and other evergreens flourished luxuriantly, and in those covers I am confident I have seen thirty or forty couples of woodcocks in a day; but Mr. Kavanagh was not much of a sportsman, had seldom shooting parties, and went out late, but I managed sometimes to bag my ten or twelve couples of woodcocks; three or four good shots would have brought home three times as many.* On these occasions beaters, or boys as they are called in Ireland, though some of them may be sixty years of age, are employed. Mr. Kavanagh possessed large landed property in the counties of Carlow and Wex-

* The celebrated sculptor, Sir Francis Chantrey, when shooting with Mr. Coke, at Holkham, 1829, killed two woodcocks at one shot, and Chantrey made it remarkable by sculpturing the birds in a graceful tablet, which he presented to his host. A nobleman shooting, in December 1857, at Kinmount, killed a woodcock and bagged it; shot immediately at a rabbit, and on going to it found a second woodcock had been killed by the shot taken at the rabbit. The bird must have been on the ground in the line of the shot.

ford. He was descended from one of the kings of Ireland. He showed me in his hall the iron crown used at the coronation of his ancestors, and he told me he had sent a small gold crown, used for the same purpose, to a museum in Dublin. He had become a proselyte to the Protestant faith, and had consequently become a marked man amongst his Roman Catholic neighbours, and even at that time, seven years after the rebellion of '98, he had all the lower windows of his large mansion blocked up with deal boards, two or three inches thick, as a defence against a night attack, and he always dined in a room on the first floor. He was an extremely well informed man, and possessed the usual Irish characteristic—great hospitality. His corps, which I went to inspect monthly, consisted of 100 light infantry, all Protestants, mostly mountaineers, and he generally had three or four of his men in his house to defend the place. His corps was particularly well disciplined by Mr. Kavanagh, who had Dundas's movements at his fingers' ends.

In 1806 I was removed to the county of Waterford, and had the monthly inspection of all the corps in the county for a twelvemonth, to the south as far as Lismore and Capoquin. In the latter place I used to remain for a few days in the winter for cock shooting in the woods of Sir John Keane, which had all the charms of romantic scenery and wildness, and in these covers I shot several couple of the small woodcock mentioned by Latham. They have the plumage* about the head dif-

* On the 2nd November 1858, a fine woodcock, in full plumage, flew into a room in the house of Mr. Sturmey where a portion of the family were at dinner. He was taken alive, and is now in the possession of Mr. Sturmey, Bath.

ferent from that of the large woodcock. The largest kind generally arrive before the small ones. Their flight is not so quick as that of the latter. They have more small feathers about the head, especially in the lower part. The small ones reach this country in the middle or latter end of November; their heads have a darker plumage, and the bill not so long. They do not lie so well as the large, and in high cover make quick and sharp turns, like the snipe, amongst the boughs, and are therefore more difficult shots.

I scarcely know a more beautiful country than that situated on the banks of the Blackwater, in which river there is one of the best salmon fisheries in Ireland, the property of the Duke of Devonshire, which at that time was rented to the serjeant of a yeomanry corps at 1200*l.* per annum. On one occasion I remained at a small inn at Capoquin in the spring for six weeks, having been sent there by the late General Sir John Floyd to search for arms, as several atrocious murders had lately been committed in the mountain districts. During this time the yeomanry corps in the district were put on permanent duty; but notwithstanding all our researches we seldom found any, as the peasantry never had them concealed about their houses or premises. Salmon might be purchased at Capoquin at fourpence per pound, and in a fortnight or three weeks I got thoroughly satiated of this delicious fish. The cider made in this district is excellent, and is the common beverage of the peasantry.

Half a century ago woodcocks were far more numerous in Ireland than at the present time. This may be accounted for in various ways. It is well known that in the northern parts of Europe where these birds breed, the eggs are considered a luxury by the higher classes,

and fetch a good price; consequently the peasantry seek woodcocks' nests to procure their eggs for sale. But there are other reasons, for Sportsmen have become more numerous in Great Britain, and generally more skilful shots, great improvements have been made in the manufacture of guns, and to which must be added the universal system of drainage, which prevents these birds procuring their food.* Pennant says that in the plain part of the hills near Winander water he saw numbers of springes for woodcocks laid between tufts of heath, with avenues of small stones on each side to direct these stupid birds into the snares, for they will not pass over the pebbles. He says that many were taken in this manner in the open weather, and sold on the spot for sixteen or twenty pence a couple (about forty years ago), and sent to the all devouring capital by the Kendal stage.

In Picardy, the French peasantry take a vast number of woodcocks when they arrive in that part of France by means of large nets that are fixed in the rides and open spaces in the woods. One winter, while walking through the market of Boulogne in the month of November, I often saw small sacks filled with woodcocks which had been captured in these nets, and I sincerely regretted that there was not some law in France to prevent these birds, which afford so much pleasure and amusement to the sportsman, being thus destroyed wholesale. The price of a couple of woodcocks at that

* The following account of the quantity of game killed in Turkey, from a correspondent, appears almost fabulous. The severity of the weather had been unexampled. Two sportsmen, first-rate shots, killed in three days, 402 woodcocks, 10 hares, 11 pheasants, 72 wild ducks, 1 wild boar, and 62 partridges, making in all 561 head of game. This will be believed by those officers quartered at Ismid and its vicinity.

time was three francs, or half-a-crown; but I have little doubt, like everything else, the price is considerably increased. Great havoc was made in Cornwall and Devonshire by glade nets hung in the woods, in former times, when the Exeter coach brought thirty dozen in a week up to the London market.

The late Lord M. had an estate in Devonshire on which there was an extensive wood. Every winter, about forty years ago, his lordship's gamekeeper used to send him to his residence in Oxfordshire such an abundance of woodcocks shot in this wood and other covers that they were frequently made into pies, which is an excellent dish. This ample supply has now ceased for several years. At a battue, a few years ago, Lord Hastings, who resides in Norfolk, near the eastern coast, shot with his party forty-two couples of woodcocks. This, I conclude, was a flight that had just arrived in this country, and were probably resting themselves in his lordship's woods for a few days, after a stormy passage across the sea, previous to their dispersing themselves over the interior of the country.

The greatest slaughter of woodcocks that I ever heard of took place in the winter of 1856 by the Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands with a party (I am ignorant of the number of guns) in Albania. They shot three hundred and eighty-five in eight days.

The cock shooting in the west of Scotland* is in some

* On the 8th November 1858, his Grace the Duke of Hamilton and J. V. Fairlie, Esq. went out shooting in the Isle of Arran, and in four hours killed 33 woodcocks, besides grouse, black game, hares, &c. The shooting of the duke and Mr. Fairlie was very much admired, as scarcely a bird escaped that was shot at, and Mr. Fairlie had three right and lefts, which seldom happens in one day at woodcock season. *The Field.*

seasons very good. For instance, the result of two days' shooting in February 1807 was sixty-four cocks by a single sportsman; on the first day thirty-seven, and on the second twenty-seven. He was accompanied by three beaters and one steady retrieving spaniel. These birds were killed in covers through which the walking is most difficult, and consequently the shooting uncertain. This performance is quite sufficient to establish the character of this gentleman as a first-rate sportsman. Some years ago woodcocks were very numerous in the winter in South Wales*, so much so that a gentleman who resided in Swansea shot in one season one hundred couples, and I have heard that in Ireland, forty or fifty years ago, fifty couples of cocks have been shot by two guns in one day. In Wales, the cock shooting in the dingles or small wooded valleys is very gratifying. Two sportsmen, one on each side, commanding a view of the low copse, with a brace of steady spaniels and a good marker, will most likely seldom fail to fill the game bag if cocks are plentiful. As a proof how essential good markers are in cock shooting, the late Mr. Brown of Frampton in Dorsetshire, who was a regular old sportsman, had constructed in different parts of his woods, against the large trees, a

* At a dinner party I inquired of a gentleman who resided in South Wales whether he had made any singular shots at woodcocks. He replied that he had not, but that his gamekeeper once shot three woodcocks with one barrel and one with the other. This appeared to astonish all the company present as it did myself.

As Mr. John Snow of Boode, Devonshire, was sporting on his grounds, in 1856, he started a rabbit, which ran through a hedge, flushing two woodcocks. Mr. S. shot one of the woodcocks, and just as he was pointing the second barrel at the other, the rabbit again crossed the path, and the charge brought down both woodcock and rabbit.

sort of rough ladders to enable the markers to ascend them rapidly. These are the only woods in which I saw this judicious plan adopted to ensure good sport.

The woodcock feeds and flies by night, commencing its flight in the evening, and returns towards daylight to the same cover. They leave England at the end of February or the beginning of March (I think I mentioned that I shot one the 9th of April), though they sometimes stay longer. These birds appear in Scotland generally on the eastern coasts, and proceed in their flight from east to west. Woodcocks are found in the Levant as far south as Smyrna and Aleppo, and it is said that some have been found as far south as Egypt, but this is the utmost extent of their migration eastward. There are a variety of opinions among sportsmen whether woodcocks in their migration to this country come to the same part of the coast to which they had resorted in the preceding year, but from the following account, derived from Daniel's "Rural Sports," it would appear that they frequently come the next season to the same part of the country:—

"In February 1798, Mr. Pleydell says a woodcock was caught in Clerston Wood, by the gamekeeper, in a rabbit net, and preserved alive. A brass ring was put on its left leg, and it was let fly from Whatcombe House. In the following season, on the 18th of December, the same bird was shot by Mr. P. in the same wood in which it was originally taken; the woodcock was stuffed and kept at Whatcombe House."

"On making my appearance in the breakfast-room the landlord came in and proposed driving me in his dog-cart to the covers we intended beating; and having partaken of a substantial breakfast, a steady old setter

accustomed to cocks was selected from my dogs, and we had made our start. Our party being myself, Ben Lloyd, a good marker, and my old favourite setter. On arriving at the wood where we were to begin operations, Ben sent his man to perch on a high tree, where he would have a good general command of the cover, and be able to mark nearly every cock we might spring, giving Jack Saddler time to reach his station. We commenced beating the cover as quickly as possible, and had not proceeded above thirty yards before the dog pointed on some bare ground on the side of a hill. On my approaching the point three cocks rose, but out of shot, Jack marking them on the opposite dingle. We arranged to beat our ground on instead of directly following the birds we had flushed, and in less than a quarter of an hour we had another point, when a single cock got up, wild, without even a chance of a snap shot. Encouraged by seeing these cocks I worked hard until four o'clock in the afternoon, having moved eighteen cocks, but without myself or Ben Lloyd obtaining a single shot. I returned back tired, with an empty bag, but thoroughly satisfied with what I had seen. The wind was very cold, and the cover rather bare where we moved the cocks, but, generally speaking, admirably adapted for woodcocks, being well interspersed with warm springs. I was neither surprised nor disappointed to find the birds so wild, feeling certain that on a future day I should have good sport, having for the last four or five years been in the habit of shooting on a large tract of wild and unpreserved country. I enjoy more seeing my dogs work well, with an occasional shot, where, when you approach the point, you know not whether it may be partridge, woodcock, grouse, hare,

snipe, or wild fowl, far more than killing a great head of game without working for it, and all true sportsmen will, I doubt not, say that with health and strength there is much more pleasure in killing six or seven brace of birds over a leash of well ranging dogs in a wild country, than by bagging thirty or forty brace in a Norfolk or Suffolk turnip field."* This is a sportsman after my own heart.

In 1833 I joined the army of the Emperor Don Pedro, in the island of Terceira, one of the Azores, as an amateur, receiving neither rations nor pay. Whilst there I got acquainted with an English gentleman who had resided several years in a retired part of the island. He was very fond of shooting, and he told me that he went to a mountain which was well wooded every year in the month of September; and in these woods and adjoining hedgerows he usually had a fortnight's very good woodcock shooting, the greater proportion being full-grown young birds which had been bred in the island. I sailed with this expedition to the coast of Portugal, and was at the capture of Oporto. An English merchant's wife displayed much courage and presence of mind on the day we took the place. I called on her about purchasing the horse of an English captain who commanded a frigate. On entering the room she remarked, "Sir, we must go to this corner, as the enemy from the other side of the Douro have fired several shots in a diagonal direction through the windows of this room, but in this part we shall be safe." And whilst with her two balls actually passed through the apartment in the direction she mentioned.

* Reminiscences of Shooting N. and S. Wales.

According to Mr. Pennant, "a few woodcocks are supposed to remain in this country every year. In Case Wood, about two miles from Tunbridge, a few breed almost annually, the young birds having been shot there in the month of August, and they were found to be as healthy and vigorous as in winter, but not so well tasted."* Latham states that, "On the 1st of May 1769, the gamekeeper of Horace Mann, Esq. shot a couple of woodcocks in Chellenden Wood, and also a couple the preceding day, which were sitting on their young." He likewise says that "a friend of his found a female woodcock sitting on her eggs, and the male close at hand; she was so tame as to suffer him to touch her without rising; and about the year 1781 a brace of old woodcocks, with five young ones, full fledged, were found; three of the young were taken and presented to a lady in the neighbourhood, one of which soon died and is now in her possession.

Mr. St. John mentions in his work of "The Wild Sports of the Highlands," that a boy brought him a young woodcock, nearly full-grown and fledged, in the second week in April. This proves that when the woodcocks remain in this island they hatch earlier than most other birds. This author further states that since extensive fir and larch plantations have been made in different parts of Scotland many woodcocks remain in the spring to breed in them.

* Jesse says: "I dined, in June 1834, with a friend at Hollycombe in Sussex. On each day I partook of a leash of young woodcocks. They were fat and excellent, and nearly full grown. They begin to breed in the Hollycombe woods early in the year, generally about the middle of February. A hen woodcock with her young may frequently be seen in the woods, but sometimes running across the grass opposite the house."

The woodcock takes little pains in the formation of its nest, which is on the ground, usually composed of dried leaves and fibres, and protected in some measure by the stump or root of a tree. The eggs, about four or five in number, are larger than those of a pigeon, and of a rufous grey, marked with dusky blotches. (A specimen of the eggs and nest, found at the Earl of Cork's, near Frome, in Somersetshire, is in the Leverian museum.) The young run as soon as they are hatched, but as they are unable for some time to provide themselves with food the old birds perform this task for them. Several specimens of the variety of plumage of woodcocks is to be seen in the Leverian museum.

Where the woodcocks remain, as the spring approaches, they may be seen flying in pairs in the morning and evening, and they then may be heard making a small piping noise, which is not heard during the winter.

Mr. St. John says, "In the woods of Altyre and Darnaway (Scotland), as well as in all other extensive plantations in the country, during the whole spring and summer, I see the woodcocks flying to and fro every evening in considerable numbers. As early as six or seven they begin to fly, uttering their curious cry, which resembles more the croak of a frog than anything else, varied, however, by a short, shrill chirp. In the evening the woodcock's flight is rapid and steady, instead of being uncertain and owl-like, as it is often in the bright sunshine. I consider their vision to be peculiarly adapted to the twilight, and even to the darker hours of night, this being the birds' feeding time."



Snipe Shooting.

CHAP. XIV.

SNIPE SHOOTING IN CANADA AND INDIA.—SNIPES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE GLOBE.—THE CAMBRIDGE FENS.—SOLITARY SNIPE.—SNIPE SHOOTING BY MR. STURT.

SNIPE shooting, in a country where they are abundant, is a most lively and diverting sport, and most men who are partial to field sports pride themselves on being good snipe shots. To acquire this knack it is necessary to have considerable practice, and until I had passed a winter in Ireland, where snipes were so numerous forty or fifty years ago, I wasted much powder and shot, and usually returned home with an almost empty bag, but at last I could manage on an average to kill three out of four, and I actually some years afterwards, in the island of Sardinia, killed nineteen snipes in succession, and I began to be so conceited that I fancied I should never miss a snipe again, but this conceit was soon taken out of me, on my subsequently missing two or three. I had every advantage in this day's shooting. There was a fine soft breeze, the snipes lay like stones, and, being very numerous, I could pick out my shots.*

* I performed this feat with a Joe Manton gun with the elevated sight, which was made a present to me by my old friend and schoolfellow Sir C. K., Bart, when he came into possession of his extensive estates and noble mansion in Northamptonshire.

When the snipe rises he makes several sharp and quick twists in the air, and then flies straight. This is the moment to fire, and then it is not a difficult shot, and a slight wound will bring him to the ground. When the snipes rise close to you you must, as I said above, wait until he has finished his manœuvres, but if he rises rather wild fire instantly, as he would probably get out of shot. On entering a swamp or bog, the sportsman should keep the wind to his back, as the snipes always fly against the the wind, and he will then be enabled to get some good cross shots, but if the hedge or long grass is rather high, then it should be beat up wind with a steady old pointer, and if he fetches and is tender mouthed he is a great treasure for snipe shooting.

The length of the common or full snipe to the end of the tail is nearly twelve inches, the breadth with the wings extended is fourteen, the bill is three inches long, of a dusky colour, flat at the end and often like shagreen above and below. The head is divided lengthwise with two black lines and three red ones, one of the last passing over the middle of the head and one above each eye; between the bill and the eyes is a dusky line. The chin is white, the neck is varied with brown and red. The scapular are beautifully striped lengthwise with black and yellow, the quill feathers are dusky, but the edge of the first is white, as are the tips of the secondary feathers. The quill feathers next the back are barred with black and pale red, the breast and belly are white. The covers of the tail are long and almost cover it, they are of a reddish brown colour. The tail consists of fourteen feathers, black on the lower part, then crossed with a broad bar of deep orange, another narrow one of black, and the ends white or pale orange. The

legs are pale green and the toes are divided to their origin.

Those who are partial to snipe shooting in Ireland generally defer this sport till the beginning of November, when the frost has set in, for several good reasons. The snipes, which are bred in the mountains and morasses in Ireland are in good condition in September; but as regards the shooting of them at this period, it cannot be compared with the snipe shooting at a more advanced season of the winter. Instead of the rapid and twisted flight which this bird takes in cold weather, it rises in the autumn in a sluggish manner, and usually takes a short flight; besides there is a considerable difference in the flavour of a snipe shot in September and one that has been killed in November or at Christmas. This *bons vivans* know well how to appreciate. There are two ways of shooting at a snipe: fire at him as soon as he rises, or let him make his two or three twists, and, as he then goes off straight, shoot at this time. The advantage of this last is that the bird is not too much injured. In the winter of 1857 snipes were found numerous in many of the morasses of Ireland, and as it was a most extraordinary mild winter, it is fair to calculate that many of the snipes had remained in the mountains. In this retreat they are certainly much safer than in the bogs or swampy grounds, where they are seldom quiet from sportsmen.

Snipes are found in greater or less numbers in the four quarters of the globe. I have seen them in South America, in the Republic of New Grenada, throughout the Valley of the Caucas, not far distant from the shores of the Pacific, in great abundance. The plumage of those birds was the same as of those found in Europe, but in size they were rather larger, which might be owing to the

good feeding grounds in this valley, but I never saw the solitary or the jack snipe or judcock in those countries.

The snipe makes its nest of dried grass; and lays four eggs of a dirty olive colour marked with dusky spots. When they are disturbed, more especially in the breeding season, they soar to a great height, making a curious bleating noise, and when descending dart rapidly down. It is also a singular fact that when the female is sitting on her eggs the cock has been seen to poise himself on her wings, making sometimes a whistling and sometimes a drumming noise.

The food of the snipe is the same as that of the woodcock, and in general they are esteemed a more delicate bird for the table than the latter. They are very fat about Christmas.

I once dined with a near neighbour of mine who piqued himself on the *bonne chère* of his table, and amongst the delicacies was a snipe pudding, which I found excellent.

The three different species of snipes found in this kingdom are the solitary snipe (very scarce), the full snipe, and the jack snipe. They who delight in snipe shooting are provided with high boots made waterproof by a mixture of tallow, tar, and beeswax, the seams being well rubbed over with it. The annoyance of these boots to the wearer is their great weight, and the impediment thereby experienced in springing from one tuft to another, or in jumping over ditches.

Snipes are to be found on our highest mountains, as also on the low moors, fens, and morasses. About the first week of April they begin to pipe, and many of them breed in this country. The young are ugly and shapeless (I have described one that I found when grouse

shooting in South Wales). The mother takes care of them until the bill is sufficiently long and firm to enable them to procure their food. The full snipe weighs about four ounces. There may be seen in the Leverian Museum several snipes with a variety of plumage.

The snipes sometimes arrive in considerable flights in this country from the north as early as September, but it has been remarked that at this time they do not lie so well as later in the season. Those that come over in October disperse soon into the interior of the country, where they are found generally, if the weather is favourable, to lie close and afford good sport, for these birds, like partridges and grouse, as regards their lying well, are much influenced by the weather, and I have found them very wild when a strong north-east wind has been blowing, and quite the reverse on a soft muggy day with a southerly wind. When a severe frost sets in, the snipes disappear and retire south to milder climates.

In Ireland the frost was so severe during the winter of 1855, that vast numbers of snipes perished from the ground becoming so hard as to prevent their procuring their food; in consequence, probably, of this circumstance snipes were extremely scarce in Ireland during the following winter.

Seventy or eighty years ago snipes were most abundant in the Cambridge fens—those brought to the Cambridge market, which at that time were all shot birds, sold from three to five pence each. In 1775, Mr. Daniel shot, in three mornings, thirty-three couples of snipes. He further states, that having known that his father's labourers caught them by drawing with a net in the night time, he mentioned to a person near Milton

Fen his surprise that this mode of taking them had not been resorted to. The fen man inquired what sort of a net was to be used, and was told a lark net would answer the purpose of a trial. This he soon borrowed, and the first night of his making the experiment caught as many snipes as filled a small hamper. The practice soon became general and the netted found so much better than the shot birds that the latter could scarcely find a purchaser in the market. The price of snipes at Cambridge has increased to a shilling and sometimes eighteen pence.

The haunts and food of the jack snipe or judcock are similar to those of the full snipe, but the bird is more rare, although Mr. St. John mentions that he once killed in a couple of hours eight brace of jack snipes, all of which he found in a small rushy pool and in the adjoining ditch. They lie so extremely close that it is rather difficult to make them rise, and their flights are always short and not so rapid as those of the other species. The jack snipe is about half the size of the former and weighs about two ounces. The length is eight inches and a half, the bill one and a half inches long and black, crown of the head black tinged with rust colour; a black streak divides the head lengthwise from the base of the bill to the nape of the neck; over each eye a yellow streak passes to the hinder part of the head; the neck varies with white, brown, and pale red. Scapulars narrow, long, brown, and margined with yellow; the rump of a glossy bluish purple; belly and vent white; the greater quill feathers dusky; tail brown with tawny edges; the tail consists of twelve pointed feathers; the legs of a greenish colour. The jack snipes breed in our marshes; the eggs are of the same colour as the common snipe, but smaller;

they do not exceed in size those of the lark. The flesh is excellent.

The solitary snipe or large snipe is rarely found in England, and Mr. St. John says he never saw but one in Scotland. They have been sometimes shot in Lancashire and also in Kent. In 1792 they were more frequently seen in the northern counties, and fine specimens of this bird are in the Leverian museum. Some sportsmen have expressed a doubt whether the solitary snipe is a distinct species from the full snipe. I conceive there is no doubt of its being a distinct species, and its habits differ from those of the full snipe. This bird is of the size between the woodcock and snipe, and weighs eight ounces, length sixteen inches, bill four inches long like that of the woodcock; crown of the head black, divided down the middle by a pale stripe. Over and beneath each eye another of the same; neck and breast of a yellowish white, finely marked with small semicircular lines of black; belly with cordated spots, and sides undulated with black: the upper parts of the body very like the common snipe; tail reddish, the two middle feathers plain, the others barred with black; the legs black. According to Latham, the solitary snipe is found in Germany and Siberia.

At the coronation of Alexander Emperor of Russia in 1856, some of the suite of our ambassador who was sent on this occasion to Moscow found in their shooting excursions in the neighbourhood many of the solitary snipes.

The most destructive enemy of the snipe, is the blue hawk. These birds beat over the marsh or morass at no great height from its surface with much exactness until they discover the snipe, who through fear, crouches as

close to the ground as possible and instantly becomes their prey.

In Dorsetshire about seventy years ago, a party of sportsmen were dining together, and the conversation turning on snipe shooting, one of the gentlemen said he would bet fifty guineas he would find a sportsman who would be able to kill twenty-five brace of snipes in one day in Dorsetshire; on which Mr. Humphrey Sturt (my old esteemed friend) said he would take the bet. "That you cannot do," said the gentleman who offered the bet, "for you are the person I intend should perform this feat." "Then," said my friend, "to convince you I will do my best, allow me to take half the bet with you." One of the company accepted it, and the terms were these, that Mr. Sturt might choose his day for snipe shooting, but if he fired one shot he must go on with his engagement. Mr. Sturt went two or three times to a favourite marsh much frequented by snipes, but observing they got up rather wild he did not fire. Going again on a warm muggy day, with a nice breeze from the south-west, a snipe got up, and I heard him say it looked so large he could not resist firing, and down it came. The snipes were numerous and lay well, and Mr. Sturt killed his first seventeen shots, on which the gentleman who had taken the bet and witnessed this excellent beginning, gave a cheque for the fifty guineas, saying he was sure he had lost his money, and that he could remain no longer, having important business to transact at home. This naturally produced confidence in Mr. Sturt that he should be able to accomplish his task. He got sixty shots, killed his twenty-five brace of snipes, two woodcocks, and a bittern, missing only seven shots. This

exploit, I venture to affirm, could not be excelled by any of the best shots of the present day, although they have a considerable advantage in the detonating gun, the discharge of which is more rapid than the flint gun.

When quartered with the Greys in Dorchester barracks in 1800, there was some very good snipe shooting, if the frost was not too severe, in the meadows and ditches in the vicinity of the town. At that period I had not had much practice in snipe shooting, and certainly wasted much powder and shot. I say wasted, because I seldom succeeded in bagging above two or three brace of snipes out of about twenty shots. One day I was firing away at the snipes with my usual ill success, when to my great mortification a labourer who was snipe shooting in the same meadows killed almost every snipe which I missed and came within shot of him. After having thus had my "nose wiped" several times, I could no longer resist going up to him to examine his gun and ammunition with which he did so much execution. The gun was a very old single barrelled one, not worth more I should think than twenty or thirty shillings. His powder was coarse when compared to mine of Pigou and Andrews. His shot he had loose in his waistcoat pocket, which he brought out to show me, with the bowl of a tobacco pipe, having a mixture from number four down to snipe shot. He told me he could not afford to miss as often as I did, as he was shooting for his livelihood, and sold the snipes in the market for sixpence a-piece. I purchased several brace of him, and on my return to barracks boasted of my good day's shooting at the mess.

Having hunted, coursed, and fished in almost every part of Dorsetshire, I really think, for the enjoyment of all

these field sports, there are few counties to be compared to it. In fox-hunting, during two seasons, I have had some excellent runs with Mr. Humphrey Sturt's hounds, particularly in the vale of Blackmoor, and coursing and hare hunting in perfection on the downs near Blandford, and between Dorchester and Bridport. The woods and covers are extensive in various parts of the county, well stocked with hares and pheasants, and generally in the winter afford good woodcock shooting. I need not mention snipe shooting after the anecdote I have related of Mr. Sturt's feat in one day. In the heather about Wareham and Poole, the blackcock is sometimes found, which comes from the New Forest. As regards fishing, there are several good trout streams, and one which runs by Bere towards Wareham. I have killed with a mayfly in this stream trout weighing between three and four pounds, and when in season they are yellow and most excellent flavour. In the river which skirts the town of Dorchester, a few miles below it, I killed trolling with a small trout a pike weighing seventeen pounds. When I had finished trolling I put the remainder of my bait down his wide throat, which made him weigh nearly nineteen pounds, and when the man at the King's Arms, Dorchester, where we had our mess, cut open the pike, he exclaimed, "See what a destructive monster this is amongst other fish." We had this pike baked with a pudding in his belly.

In Canada forty years ago snipes were so numerous that four gentlemen shot in one day in the island of Chateau Bicker, in three hours and half 169 snipes, and in one day the same party shot 552 snipes. They were all first-rate shots. A friend of mine who resides in Gloucestershire told me that his son was one day

shooting with a pistol loaded with small shot, and that a snipe flying near him he fired at it and brought it down.* A near relative of mine who was snipe shooting in the paddy or rice grounds in India, shot a snipe that was flying low, and killed another that was on the ground. I have understood that snipe shooting in these paddy fields has cost many an Englishman his life, for to have this shooting in perfection the sportsman must expose himself to the scorching rays of a tropical sun, as the snipes then lie like stones. Whilst the head has to bear this intolerable heat his feet and legs are struggling through the mud and water of the rice fields; but it is a common remark amongst foreigners that in whatever part of the globe Englishmen find themselves, regardless of the consequences or example of the inhabitants, they adhere obstinately to their English habits. The Spaniards and Portuguese say that only Englishmen and dogs are seen walking about the streets in the heat of the day, whilst they are enjoying their siesta.

* The Earl of Kintore's gamekeeper, Alexander Strachan, killed six snipes, all on the wing, at one shot; and the same individual, some time since, shot an otter and a fox, right and left.

In the early part of the winter of 1857 the snipe shooting in Nottinghamshire was more excellent, especially in the valley of the Trent, than it had been for many years.

CHAP XV.

QUAIL SHOOTING.—QUAILS IN MALTA, SICILY, AND RUSSIA.—LAND-RAIL OR CORNCRAKE.—ANECDOTE OF FRENCH ABBÉ.

" In narrow compass oft is pent,
A hero's soul, to pigmy lent.
Than quail no braver bird did yet,
Talons and beak for battle whet:
And Greek and Roman saw with pleasure,
Their strength the tiny warriors measure."—ANON.

" Sweeping with shadowy gust the fields of corn,
While the quail clamours for its running mate."
THOMSON'S *Seasons*.

THE common quail is not above half the size of the partridge; the feathers of the head are black edged with rusty brown; the breast is of a pale yellow-red spotted with black; the feathers on the back are marked with lines of pale yellow, and the legs are of a pale hue. Except in the colour here described it every way resembles a partridge in shape, and excepting that it is a bird of passage it is similar to it in all its habits.

It appears to be an inhabitant of almost every part of the globe, and early in the last century they were numerous in most of the counties of England, and are still so in Ireland.* I find it difficult to account for

* The sparrow-hawk is mentioned by the poet Chaucer, in his "Assembly of Birds," as being a favourite at that time for the purpose of taking quails:—

" The hardy sperhauke (eke),
The quail's foe."—*Bell's edition*, vol. iv. page 203.

their being now so scarce in this country, especially as they are common in the northern departments of France, and when the shooting has commenced there you may find plenty of quails in the various market towns, particularly at Boulogne, and as they are birds of passage, one would naturally conclude, like other birds that migrate, they would find their way across the British channel. It is well known that the shepherds in this country used formerly to catch a great number of quails with the quail-pipe.*

The miracle performed by the Almighty in sending such swarms of quails as food to the Israelites in the desert is thus stated in Numbers, chap. xi. v. 31: "And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth."

During the many years I shot in various parts of

* The Quail-pipe, to call the female, is made of a small leather purse, two fingers wide and four fingers long, in the shape of a pear. This is stuffed half full of horse hair, and at the end of it is placed a small whistle, made of the bone of a rabbit's leg, about two inches long, and the end formed like a flageolet; with a little soft clay. This is the end fastened into the purse; the other is closed up with the same substance, only a hole is opened with a pin, to make it give a distinct and clear sound. To make this sound it must be held full in the palm of the hand, with one of the fingers placed over the top; then the purse is to be pressed, and the finger is to shake over the middle of it to moderate the sound it gives into a sort of shake. This is the most useful call, for it imitates the note of the hen quail, and seldom fails to bring a cock to the net if there be one near the place. In the "Spectator" we read: "A dish of wild fowl furnished conversation for the rest of the dinner, which concluded with a late invention of Will Wimble's for improving the quail-pipe.

England, I never found but one bevy of quails, which was in the extensive open corn country on the south-west side of the town of Dorchester in Dorsetshire. There were in this bevy four brace and a half; and I think I shot all but two. Quails lie close, fly straight, and rather near the ground, and they are an easy shot if let to go a proper distance. I have sometimes found a brace, and now and then a single bird, in the open corn fields in Oxfordshire, near the small town of Watlington, and it is to be regretted that they have become so scarce in this country, as they afford, what is so agreeable to the sportsman, a variety in his day's shooting, and besides they are a delicate bird for the table, and great numbers are brought alive in the summer to our all-devouring capital from France. When I was stationed with my regiment in the island of Malta, in 1809, considerable flights of quails made this island a half-way house to rest themselves in the autumn on their passage to Sicily and the coast of Naples; and although the heat is excessive at this season*, I could not resist going out quail shooting, and I sometimes had my game-bag well filled, but I subsequently paid rather dearly for indulging in this diversion during the heat of the day, by getting a low fever, from which

* The late Lord Byron, in his poem entitled "Adieu to Malta," calls it a little military hot-house. I knew his lordship intimately. He was an honorary member of the mess of my regiment. At times he was a most delighful companion at the mess table, and as merry and full of life as the youngest ensign. The next day he did not appear to be the same man, thoughtful, gloomy, and silent. When he landed at Malta, the late Governor, General Sir Hildebrand Oakes, offered him apartments in his palace, which he politely declined. He then took lodgings, and preferred living with our regiment. Liberty and independence were the idols of this great poet and eccentric character.

I did not entirely recover until I found myself at sea in the latter end of October, on a shooting excursion to the island of Sardinia, the particulars of which I shall hereafter relate. On one occasion whilst shooting at Malta I saw a considerable flight of quails arrive and land near me — one within a few yards in a tuft of grass. As he appeared much exhausted, I approached the spot carefully and put my hat over him, and succeeded in capturing him. He was in good condition. In the pursuit of my quail shooting, I was sometimes obliged to follow them into the cotton-fields, which I was really sorry to do, as at this season the cotton heads burst, and display the most beautiful white cotton. In Malta they cultivate three species of cotton plant, one natural to the country, another from Siam, and a third of a cinnamon colour, called Antilles cotton.

In conversations I have had with experienced sportsmen respecting quails being so seldom found in England, they could only account for it from the fact that in former times the shepherds caught great numbers of them in the summer with the male and female quail pipe; but as this plan is adopted in various parts of France, particularly in Gascony, still they are numerous in that country, chiefly from migration. This does not solve the problem of the quails no longer taking their flight to England.

Quail fighting was a favourite amusement with the Athenians. They abstained from the flesh, deeming it unwholesome, supposing that it fed upon the white hellebore, but they reared great numbers of them for the purpose of seeing them fight, and staked sums of money, as we did with regard to game cocks, upon the success of the combat. The Chinese are also very fond of quail-

fighting, and on these occasions considerable sums are exchanged by the parties backing their bird.

When I was quartered with my regiment in the citadel of Messina, I had some excellent quail shooting for about a fortnight in the spring, when these birds were on their passage from Africa to the southern coast of Italy. During this period the vineyards and gardens all round Messina were, you might almost say, swarming with quails, but it was really a service of some danger to go in pursuit of them, for all classes in Messina down to the lowest who could muster a gun and powder and shot were bent on the destruction of these birds of passage, and two or three times I was very near being shot by the Cockney sportsmen, and told them plainly that if they were not more cautious in firing they should have the contents of my two barrels. It is almost incredible, but really a fact, that many thousands of quails are captured within a few miles on the coast near Naples. There are small towers erected on the shore at small distances from each other, to which large nets are fixed, and I have seen in a work on the subject of quails that one hundred thousand have been caught in those nets in the course of a fortnight. The Neapolitan Bishop of the Lipari Islands derives the greater part of his income from a small tax on the quails imported from these islands to Naples and other parts of Italy. In Gascony, particularly all round the vicinity of Bordeaux and Libourne, a great number of quails are captured by means of the quail-pipe in the spring; they are then fattened in cages, and may be purchased for about sixpence each. As you walk in the streets you may hear them calling to each other.

In the south of Spain, in the province of Andalusia,

quails are very numerous, so much so, that a Frenchman writing on the field sports of Spain, exclaims, "Toujours des cailles!" however this gentleman has formed an erroneous opinion of the game in these provinces, for you find there hares, red-legged partridges, the bustard, and in the winter excellent woodcock and snipe shooting. The Wallachian gipsies about Bucharest, before the war with Russia, paid a tribute to the Porte in quails, which birds were taken by them in great numbers by means of sparrow hawks. The hawks were caught in nets probably whilst migrating, trained for the purpose, and again turned loose as soon as the requisite number of quails had been taken.

Landrail or Corncrake.

This bird has been supposed to be the same as the waterrail. This is an erroneous opinion, from an idea that it is only a change of colour in the plumage at a certain period. This error proceeds from not sufficiently considering the character and nature of each, which are totally different. The length of the landrail is nine inches; the bill is one inch long, strong and thick, and of a greyish brown, formed like that of the water hen; the eyes hazel; the feathers on the upper parts of a rufous brown; each marked down the middle with black; the under parts the same, but paler, and edged with a pale rust colour; chin very pale; both wing coverts and quills of a lightish chesnut; the fore part of the neck and breast is of a pale ash colour; a streak of the same colour extends over each eye, from the bill to the side of the neck; the belly is of a yellowish white; the sides, thighs, and vent are faintly marked with rusty

coloured streaks. The tail is short, and of a deep bay; the legs are of the same colour as the bill.

It does not, like the waterrail, frequent watery places, but is always found among corn, grass, broom and furze. The landrail migrates to the continent before winter, but some have been shot occasionally in December, which were probably wounded birds, unable to take their departure with the rest. As there have been some doubts about the landrail being able to cross the channel, yet considering its long muscular wings one may come to the conclusion that it cannot have more difficulty in crossing the ocean than a variety of small short winged birds. An author calls this bird the farmer's friend, as, on having examined his stomach, he found it contained a quantity of beetles, flies, larvæ, &c. This bird when fat, in the autumn, is justly esteemed one of the most delicate and delicious for the table, and should be roasted with much care, enveloped in vine leaves.

Whenever I shot a fat landrail, I wrapped it up in paper carefully, and put it in my pocket, as it was far too delicate a bird to be mixed with others in the game bag. The corncrake is the harbinger of summer, and begins to be heard about the middle of May, and continues its note during the breeding season. In meadows, from the time the grass is grown until mown, there issues from the thickest part of the herbage a sound like the word "cuck, cuck," and which is a noise resembling that made by scraping the teeth of a large comb under the fingers. When I was staying for a few days in Shropshire with Sir William C——, Bart., in September 1857, landrails were so a'undant in his neighbourhood, that we had them every day at dinner,

once three brace of them. Partridges were also numerous there, and on the 5th of September the baronet and two friends shot eighteen brace, which may be considered a good day's sport for Shropshire. The party were not out more than four or five hours, and found the birds strong and wild; but this season was allowed by sportsmen to have been the most favourable for the breed of partridges that had been known for the last twenty years, the heat having been excessive during the months of July and August.

Pennant says that the landrail lays from twelve to twenty eggs, of a dull white, marked with a few yellow spots; but, according to Latham and Buffon, the number of eggs does not exceed twelve, which are larger than those of the quail and more coloured, are an inch and a half in length, and not unlike those of the missel thrush, being of a reddish cinereous white, marked with ferruginous blotches, with a few indistinct ones of a pale reddish ash colour. The nest is negligently made with a little moss or dry grass, and placed generally in a hollow where the grass is thickest. The young crakes are covered with a black down, and run about as soon as they burst the shell, following their mothers; but quit not the meadow until the scythe sweeps away their habitation. They then shelter themselves amongst buckwheat, oats, and very frequently in clover seed, and in waste grounds overspread with broom; a few return to the meadows at the end of the season. There is little difficulty in ascertaining when a dog scents a landrail, from his keen search and the tenacity with which the bird perseveres in keeping the ground; they will take to the wing speedily when first found, but to get them up a second time is no easy task, and they will then lie

so close that the dog in keenness runs over them, and they then make a retrograde movement. On these occasions they have been sometimes caught by the hand. The bird flies with his legs hanging down, and takes short flights. The sportsman should let the rail go at least five and twenty yards before he fires, and a slight wound will bring him down; but when shot too near they are rendered unfit for the table. The fleetness of this bird's feet compensates for the slowness of its flight. Daniel says that this bird sometimes perches on a bough in the hedge; it may be so, but I confess I never saw it, although I have shot a great many. Landrails are plentiful in the Isle of Anglesea, and are also numerous in Ireland, where it is supposed they remain during the winter. They are also found in the north of Scotland, and in the Hebrides and Orkneys. On their first arrival in England they do not weigh more than six ounces, but before their departure they have been known to exceed eight ounces.

The migrations of this bird extend more to the north than the south, and notwithstanding the slowness of its flight, it penetrates into Poland, Sweden, Denmark, and even Norway. When shooting during the autumn in the Isle of Purbeck, near Swanage, I found a considerable number of landrails. They were all in excellent condition. I have mentioned in the chapter on falconry that a blacksmith at Bridport captured these birds with a sparrow hawk, and sent them to Weymouth for Her Majesty Queen Charlotte, and was paid five shillings a brace for them. A French sporting book gives an anecdote of a French abbé, a decided *bon vivant*, who was engaged to dine with the parents of two of his pupils. The young men had promised to call at his house to

walk with him to their father's. On arriving at the abbé's residence, his female servant refused admittance, declaring he was not at home. Having been appointed to call at that hour, the young men insisted, and forced their way into his dining-room. To their surprise, they found him sitting at a table, with a napkin tied under his chin, and on a plate, which he tried to conceal, the remains of a savoury feast. "Why!" exclaimed the young men, "Do you forget you dine with us to-day?" "By no means," said the abbé; "but I received a present of two fat landrails. The fat would have been spoiled if kept till to-morrow; therefore, what could I do but have them dressed immediately." He finished his feast, and it is added that no one who saw him afterwards partake of the dinner could have suspected that he had just eaten two landrails.

CHAP. XVI.

THE BUSTARD: ITS HABITS.—A FRENCHMAN'S ANECDOTE.—THE BUSTARD IN MOROCCO, THE ISLAND OF SARDINIA, AND CANADA.

"Let feather'd songsters lurk in groves,
O'er freer space the bustard roves;
When England boasted open plains,
They were the bustard's lov'd domains:
Why has he bid these haunts farewell?
Fence, palisades, and fosses tell."

THE bustard or wild turkey is considered the largest of the British fowls; the male usually weighing about twenty-five pounds; there are some old birds that have been found to weigh as much as twenty-seven pounds. The breadth, with the wings extended, nine feet; the length nearly four. Besides the difference of size and colour, the male is distinguished from the female by a tuft of feathers about five inches long on each side of the lower mandible. Its head and neck are ash colour; the back is barred traversely with black and bright rust colour; the greater quill feathers are black, the belly white; the tail is marked with broad red and black bars, and consists of twenty feathers; the legs are dusky. The female is about half the size of the male; the crown of the head of a deep orange, traversed with black lines; the rest of the head is brown, the lower part of

the fore side of the neck is ash coloured, in other respects it resembles the male, only the colour of the back and wings are considerably more dull.

These birds were formerly found in most of the open countries in considerable numbers in the eastern and southern parts of England, from Dorsetshire to the wolds of Yorkshire.

They are a very shy, wild bird, and as they were found in the extensive open plains like those of Wiltshire, it was difficult to get within shot of them. This being the case I am at a loss to account for this noble bird being almost extinct in England. I was told some time ago that a society of noblemen and gentlemen had been formed in Norfolk, whose object was to protect the bustard, and by this means increase their number in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

The bustard rises from the ground with difficulty, but when once on the wing they fly heavily, and will continue their flight for several miles without resting. They run with great speed, and there are instances of their having been taken by greyhounds. They are partial to their old haunts, and rarely go more than twenty or thirty miles from them. The food of the bustard is corn and other vegetables, and the large earthworms which appear on the surface of the downs before sunrise in the summer; these are replete with moisture, answer the purpose of liquid, and thus enable them to exist long without water on wide and extensive dry tracts.

Besides this, the males have an excellent magazine as a security against drought, viz. a pouch, whose entrance lies directly under the tongue; this they fill with water to supply the hen when sitting, or the young birds before they can fly. The bustard lays only two

eggs, of the size of those of a goose, of a pale olive brown, marked with spots of dark colour, and sits on her eggs for thirty days; they make no nest, but merely scrape a hole in the ground. If any one should have touched the eggs they desert them. In Wiltshire they were formerly found in large turnip fields near the downs, and a century ago sometimes in flocks of twenty or thirty.

It is truly to be regretted that the bustard is now scarcely ever seen in this part of England. A friend of mine, when riding across the Salisbury plains, about ten years ago, saw a bustard, not more than thirty or forty yards from him: this is the only one I have heard of being seen in Wiltshire, excepting that, in the summer of 1859, a gentleman saw two bustards on the Salisbury plains at no great distance from him.

When I resided in Norfolk between forty and fifty years ago, being then on half pay, I called one morning on an old friend, the late Mr. Hyde of Lexham Hall, who said, "Stay and dine with me, and you shall have a bustard for dinner." I accepted the invitation, especially as I had never tasted the flesh of this bird; but I felt a great curiosity to know from Mr. Hyde by what means he had got the bustard. He said, "A tenant of mine brought me the bustard a few days ago, and thus related how he got it: 'I was riding up a lane with my gun and a terrier dog to scare the rooks and birds from a piece of wheat, when a large bird, which I had never before seen, flew across the lane about twenty yards from me. I fired at him and broke the bustard's pinion wing, and he fell on the other side of the hedge. I instantly jumped off my horse, scrambled over the hedge, and saw the bird running almost as fast as a greyhound.

As I found I had no chance of catching him, I set my dog after him, and after a chase he seized the bird and kept him until I came up. So I brought you this bird, and beg you to accept him, as I suppose from what I have heard that it is a wild turkey.'" It proved an excellent bird, and the breast was of two colours, brown and white.

The bustard is found in several parts of Spain, particularly in the wide and extensive plains of Castille. A young Frenchman thus gives an account of a bustard he shot in Andalusia: "One day, going from Zebeda to Lebrija, I was in some young wheat. My dog Chispa followed cautiously a brace of red-legged partridges which were running. All at once the dog raised his nose, pricked up his ears, left the partridges, and started off in an opposite direction; at the end of twenty yards he came to a dead point, with his head elevated as if he was pointing a bullock. I ran, expecting from this singular attitude something uncommon. I advanced before my dog, following the direction which his ardent and fixed eye indicated. Then I saw, rising above the corn, first a head attached to a long neck, then a feathered body, which running on two long legs, slowly spread two wide wings, and took a heavy flight. I fired at this unknown bird, my gun loaded with small shot. It fell by the greatest chance, and Chispa, flying on it furiously, had the good luck by a bite to break one of the pinions of his wing, and to hold it till I came up. It was a bustard, called by the Spaniards *avertada*, of the large species which live in Africa, and cross the narrow channel of the sea to breed in Andalusia. This bustard is infinitely larger than the two other species found in

Europe, principally in the steppes of South Russia. This, which I shot, and which my dog had some trouble in holding, had his head the height of my shoulder. It was so heavy that had it been killed outright, I should have had much trouble in carrying it. Luckily, it was only wounded in the wing; I took hold of his neck in my right hand and made it walk by the side of me. We had it dressed, and it was so substantial that there was enough for ourselves and five servants. The Spaniard where I lodged said that I should not have been able to get so near the bustard had it not been sitting on its eggs. *Comme le crocodile de la fable, je pleurai mes œufs, car chacun d'eux aurait pu me faire une omelette.*"

"In returning from the fens," says Daniel, "in the dusk of the evening, from snipe-shooting some years since, I shot at a bustard which flew very low over my head, not knowing at the time what bird it was, and though the gun was charged with small shot the bird, from the short distance was so wounded, as to be caught by a shepherd within three hundred yards of the place the morning after. This bird weighed nearly twenty-eight pounds, and the shepherd sold it for a guinea to a gentleman at Cambridge."

In Morocco they fly the falcon at the bustard, and when the hawk approaches and makes his stoop at him, he has been known to spirt the water in his assailant's eyes, and has by this means baffled the pursuit of his enemy. Like the ostrich, it swallows small stones. Buffon relates that in the stomach of one opened by the academicians there were found (besides small stones) to the number of ninety doubloons, all worn and polished

by the attrition of the stomach, but without any appearance of erosion. I confess this appears marvellous.

In Sir Robert Libbold's time they were found in the Merse, but are now supposed to be extinct in Scotland. In Hungary they are so numerous that they have sometimes been seen in flocks of two or three hundred.

In the island of Sardinia I have frequently seen the large and small bustard, but they were so shy that I never could get a shot at them. The bustard, or wild turkey, of South America, is a different species of bird from that of Europe. In their plumage they are entirely black, weighing sometimes as much as twenty pounds. They perch on the branches of the trees, and are a stupid silly bird, easily approached. In "My Travels in the Interior of the Republic of Columbia," I gave an instance of this, when a gentleman, a native of the country, who was travelling with me, snapped his flint gun three or four times at one which never moved from the branch of the tree, and he at last shot it. The flesh of this bird is excellent, and my man cook I brought with me from England used to make most palatable and nourishing soup of it. When travelling in some of the provinces of this then extensive republic, a gun is a very convenient commissary, more especially when you arrive within a few days' journey of the Andes, for then neither house nor Indian cabin is to be seen on the northern side of these mountains; nothing but barancas or large barns, erected by the Government for travellers with their mules to find shelter.

From the open and extensive plains which the bustard in Europe frequents, and as he is generally on the alert, it is difficult to get within shot; however, by accom-

panying a cart and with your gun concealed, you may sometimes put them off their guard and kill one; and in places where shepherds are frequently seen by them carrying hurdles, the shooter concealing his gun behind one may succeed in getting within shot.

Perhaps the greatest novelty of all the edibles ever cooked in England was a couple of wild turkeys shot on the 4th December 1856, in Canada West, full 180 miles beyond Toronto, to which town they were brought by a party of hunters on the 6th, found in the forest bordering on Lake Huron. Mr. Stanbury, who resides in Canada, purchased two turkeys in their feathers, and started the same afternoon for New York, a distance of nearly 600 miles. On the evening of the 10th he embarked in a steamer for Liverpool, arriving in the Mersey about midnight on the 19th. From Liverpool Mr. Stanbury proceeded to London, where he presented one of the birds to a friend, and the other he forwarded on Monday by rail to his sister, Mrs. Hawkins, of the Railway Hotel at Weston-super-Mare. The bird weighed 19 lbs. when trussed. On Christmas Day Mr. Stanbury dined with Mrs. Hawkins, when the Canadian turkey, which had been brought some 5000 miles since shot, formed an attractive dish upon the festive board. It was in prime condition and of most delicious flavour, very similar to that of the English pheasant. Such are the prodigies that can now be performed by steam by land and sea.

CHAP. XVII.

THE ORTOLAN: ABUNDANT IN HOLLAND: SUBJECT TO APOPLEXY FROM OVER FATNESS.—SMOLLETT'S METHOD OF DRESSING THEM.—ADVENTURE IN HOLLAND.—SEVERITY OF DUTCH CRIMINAL LAWS.—SIR DAVID DUNDAS.—THREATENED ARREST.—DISPATCHES TO DUTCH ARMY.—FORTUNATE PROMOTION.

I WILL now give a description of the ortolan, which is considered by epicures and bons-vivants the most delicious of all birds for the table. Its flavour is super-excellent, and when in good condition one may really affirm that it almost melts in the mouth. The ortolan is something less than the yellowhammer; length six inches and a quarter; bill yellowish; the head and neck cinereous olive; throat and round the eyes yellowish; the breast and belly are red, and the upper part of the body brown, with rufous edges, excepting the outer feather, marked obliquely with white near the end, with a brown tip; legs yellowish. The female differs in having the head and neck inclining to ash colour, marked with small blackish down; the shaft of each feather otherwise like the male.

The ortolan or bunting is the same bird with the celebrated miliria of Varro. Long before his time it was known at Rome, where it was kept in the aviaries with the quails and thrushes. The ortolans are prepared for

the table in various ways. Sometimes they are roasted in a natural or artificial egg-shell; a mode of cooking borrowed from the ancients, who not only dressed small birds, but presented them at their entertainments in this manner, so that upon opening the egg they were seen amidst a high-seasoned sauce. In Gascony, where a great number of ortolans are taken in the spring with bar-nets, and put in cages to fatten with oats and millet in a dark room, they sometimes weigh as much as three ounces. When the ortolans arrive at their proper degree of fatness they should be killed; if this is not done they soon drop off their perch in a fit of apoplexy. I tried the experiment on one, and found him lying dead in his cage from over fatness. My wife, when residing in this department, put into a lottery for twelve dozen of fat ortolans, but fortunately she did not gain the prize, for I should have been rather puzzled what to do with them. Six dinners would have disposed of half the number, and the remainder I should have given to my friends. There are some presents which you receive from the kindness of your friends which entail expense and anxiety; amongst these I class a haunch of venison, sent in the Dog-days, which must be dressed without delay, and the chances are two to one that on so short a notice you are unable to get a party to partake of it, and driven to the necessity of eating it *en famille.* The ortolans in France are cooked in vine leaves, and when a *dîner fin* is given, a dish of ortolans always forms part of the second course if these birds are in season, and if the party should consist of sixteen persons there would be an ortolan for each. Although I have frequently partaken of these dinners when I resided with my family for some years in Gascony, I never recollect one of these

birds leaving the table. The price there of an ortolan, when fat, is one franc, so that this may be considered a very expensive dish.

Smollett remarks that the best way of dressing these ortolans is to stuff them into a roll scooped of its crumb, to baste them well with butter, and roast them until they are brown and crisp.* The note of the ortolan is particularly sweet, and like the nightingale, they sing both in the night and day.

They are found in several parts of Europe, but very rarely in England. In Italy they are very numerous, and are found in some parts of Germany and Sweden, migrating from one to the other in spring and autumn, and in their passage are caught in great numbers.

In some parts the ortolans make their nest in a low hedge, and on the ground. It is carelessly constructed, much like that of the lark. The female lays four or five eggs, greyish, and in general has two broods in the year. They frequent much the oat fields, are very partial to this grain, and become very fat soon, and are deemed sufficiently so for the table, though the preference in point of flavour is always given to those that are fattened artificially. In India they make their appearance in the beginning of March, and arrive in vast flights.

The ortolans are also found in considerable numbers in the neighbourhood of Maestricht. When fat, they are sent to Brussels for sale.

* The modern Italians are fond of small birds, which they eat under the name of Beccaficos, which fatten on figs. The prodigious price paid by the Roman tragedian for one dish of singing birds is well known. The price of this expensive dish, according to Pliny, was about 6843*l.* 10*s.* according to Arbuthnot's tables. This enormous expense perhaps arose more from ostentation than epicurism.

Whilst writing on this subject it recalls to my mind some of the events of my early life, more particularly the occasion on which I first saw any ortolans. In my first campaign in Holland and Flanders, joining the army as a cornet in the Scots Greys (the united army being then commanded by his late R. H. the Duke of York), on our second day's march, after retreating from Antwerp into Holland before the overwhelming French army commanded by the republican general Pichegru, our army took up a position a few miles in the rear of the town and strong fortress of Breda. A day or two after our arrival in this position I was sent in the command of a piquet of cavalry of the Greys to the outposts. Having relieved the old piquets and placed my videttes, I took up my quarters at the clergyman's house in the village, who spoke French tolerably well. After breakfast I walked with the pastor in his garden. My curiosity was excited at seeing hanging up against his house at least two dozen of small cages, all occupied by the same species of birds, which I had never before seen. On my asking the pastor their name, and why he kept such a number of the same sort, he told me they were ortolans which he was fattening to send to the Prince of Orange at the Hague, as by the tenure of his living he was obliged to send a certain number annually, when these birds were fat, and were reckoned a great delicacy for the table. On hearing this I gave a broad hint that I should like to taste one; but Monsieur le Pasteur replied that he could not comply with my wish, as the ortolans were not in good condition, and that he had only the number required to be sent.

I thought at the time that the Stadtholder had but a poor chance of ever tasting the ortolans, for it was

rumoured in the army that we should shortly retire towards Bois-le-Duc, and when the republican sans-culottes occupied the village they would come like a flight of locusts, and as they detested all ministers of religion, would devour and spoil all on the premises of my friend the pastor.

On continuing my walk alone in the garden, the day being excessively hot, in the month of August, I came to a pond, and on the surface of the water I saw several brace of large carp, apparently fast asleep. Finding I could not have ortolans for dinner, I conceived that fish would be no bad substitute for the birds, and determined to try whether, with my long basket-handled straight sword, I could not give a mortal wound to some of the drowsy carp; so drawing it, I crept quietly on my hands and knees to the edge of the pond, and made a desperate cut amongst them. The water soon appeared tinged with blood, and to my no small satisfaction I soon perceived a large carp rise to the surface of the water in a dying state, and soon, by the help of my sword, brought him within reach. It was a fine fish, weighing between three and four pounds. On returning to the house I showed it to the pastor, who at first did not appear very well pleased; but on my explaining my new mode of angling, he was unable to refrain from laughing, saying that he had a good cook, and it should be stewed in wine for our dinner. I found it excellent; but at the age of fifteen, with the appetite of a wolf, nothing comes amiss. On my piquet being relieved I took my leave of the pastor, and we never met again, for the army soon retired from this position.

On our second day's march with the army, over an extensive heath, the town and fortress of Breda being

three or four miles on our right, we saw, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, a large gallows, surrounded by a high wall, and several objects on one flank which we could not altogether distinguish. Our curiosity being greatly excited, Lieut. Batson and myself determined to gallop towards these objects. On our near approach to the gallows the sight was really appalling. Four men were hanging from it, who appeared to have not been long executed. We were enabled, on horseback, just to look inside the wall round the gallows, in which were a number of skulls, skeletons, and human bones. On one flank of it were three high poles, with iron spikes, on which were fixed three human heads; next to these was a man crucified, and then came the most ghastly sight I ever beheld—a man who had no doubt been broken alive on the wheel; and though it is above sixty years since I saw this dreadful object, I can still bring to mind his tortured and horrid features. We heard subsequently that this wretch had suffered this cruel death in consequence of having murdered his wife in a most atrocious way.*

On our return to join our regiment we unluckily met

* One of our outlying piquets of infantry was stationed at a short distance from the gallows and the other disgusting objects. It was a cold night; and the wind coming from that quarter, brought from it a most disagreeable smell, which caused the officer and detachment much annoyance. After enduring this for some time, the serjeant inquired of the officer whether he would allow the men to cut down the long poles, the crucifix, and the rack; adding that the wall was too high to get at the four fellows hanging on the gallows. He gave his consent, and the men soon with their billhooks cut down all that was outside the wall and threw the heads and bodies into the enclosure, and having now plenty of wood, made a good fire. The municipality of Breda made a complaint of this outrage to the Commander-in-chief, but I never heard that any notice was taken of it.

Sir David Dundas, better known afterwards by the name of "Old Pivot," who commanded our brigade. He gave us a sharp reprimand, and threatened to put us under arrest for quitting the column; however, it all ended in threats, and we heard no more of it, and several of our officers regretted much they had not been of our party. The horrid sight we had just witnessed proved incontestably how severe the Dutch criminal laws must have been at that period. I am not aware whether they have been ameliorated, like our own, but I believe that most thinking people are of opinion that we have gone from one extreme to another; for there are even members of Parliament, who are desirous that capital punishment should be done away with altogether. I know that the Dutch have always been considered the most severe and rigorous slavemasters, and, I regret to say, the English stand next upon the list, and, what will appear rather extraordinary, the Spaniards are the most lenient. This I can safely state from what I saw during nearly two years that I resided in the republic of Columbia. I have made use of the word "extraordinary," because one feels horrified on perusing the accounts of the cruelties which were practised by Cortes, Pizarro, and other Spaniards on the unfortunate Indians in the working of the gold and silver mines in Mexico and Peru; but one may easily account for this by learning that avarice and bigotry were the predominant passions of those times.

Our brigade consisted of the Greys, Bays, and Enniskillens, literally all Scotch, English, and Irish regiments. They were called the China Brigade. The Bays, all bay horses with long tails; the Greys, all grey horses with long tails; and Enniskillens, all black with

long tails. For effect the Greys were placed in the centre of the other two regiments, and nothing could be finer than the men and horses, the former tall and athletic, and the latter very powerful animals. In a short charge they were a most formidable enemy against infantry.

In a charge made by this brigade on some French infantry at Cateau in Flanders, they did great execution on the enemy. The late Colonel Boardman, who commanded the Greys, was in weight nearly twenty stone, but a man full of wit and humour. On this occasion, having one of his spurs shot off, he said to one of his officers, "These rascally sans-culottes have unknighted me." There was a singular instance of the escape of Serjeant Shields, a rough rider, who was then shot through the body. He recovered, married a young wife, and when I left the Greys was second riding-master. Much of the time of the soldiers was occupied then in powdering and dressing each other's hair. The Greys, as grenadiers, had their hair formed behind into large clubs, the other regiments wore their hair in long tails. All the officers wore the latter. The only advantage one can suppose to be derived from these clubs and queues, is that they might sometimes have the effect of warding off a sabre cut.

When the head-quarters of the army were at Contigues, one day's march from Antwerp, an event occurred which proved very fortunate for my promotion at so early an age. Each brigade of cavalry sent orderly officers to the head-quarters. (These officers always dined at the Duke of York's table). They remained on this duty for twenty-four hours, and were supposed to be at all times ready in their turn to convey despatches to the generals commanding the different corps of the allied

army. Being on this duty, Colonel Jügel, the Duke's secretary, made inquiry for the first orderly officer to convey important despatches to the Prince of Orange, who commanded the Dutch army which formed one of our wings. None of the orderly officers were to be found except myself, and although it was not my turn, Colonel Jügel desired me instantly to go off with the despatches; that on my arrival at the Hanoverian head-quarters, Count Walmoden, who commanded the Germans, would give me an escort to the Dutch outposts; that I should remain all night at the Prince's head-quarters, after delivering my despatches, and return the next day to Antwerp, to which place our head-quarters would be removed. I was particularly well mounted, and when I arrived at Count Walmoden's station, he gave me a corporal and two dragoons, light cavalry, as my escort to the Dutch advanced post. I had rode only a few miles with this escort when, in the midst of a wide and dreary heath, the scoundrels suddenly turned their horses, and galloped away from me in the direction we had come. I called after them in vain in French. I now found myself in a most awkward and perilous situation, being totally ignorant of the country, and the chances were even that I might ride into the French outposts instead of the Dutch, as the former, I had been told, were at no great distance. After proceeding two or three miles over this heath, I came to some cultivated land, where a young Flemish peasant was ploughing. Most of them speak a little patois of bad French, and I contrived to make him understand that I wanted him to take one of his horses out of the plough, and pilot me to the Dutch outposts, for he admitted he knew where they were stationed. As he ob-

stinately refused to go with me, I drew my sword, and threatened to run him through the body (laughable enough this at my age). However, the threat and the display of a couple of florins proved successful, and we were soon on our way to the Dutch advanced posts, and towards the evening I saw with the greatest satisfaction the orange cockade. I paid the peasant the two florins, and was forwarded to the head-quarters of the Prince, to whom I delivered my despatches. The Prince and staff of officers appeared not a little surprised to see a youngster like myself entrusted with important despatches. His Highness gave orders that I should sup with the staff, so that I fared well. My grey charger was exceedingly admired, and some of the officers wished to make an exchange with me; but I told them I could not do this, as my regiment consisted entirely of grey horses. I was told by one of the staff officers that the Dutch army would be under arms at daylight preparatory to its returning across the river Scheldt, and he warned me not to remain after the army had marched off, observing that as soon as the enemy ascertained that the Dutch outposts had been withdrawn, they would instantly send some of their light cavalry to reconnoitre, and that I might be made prisoner. Early the next morning I saw all the Dutch army on their retreat, as well as I could judge, a fine body of men. I found no difficulty in returning to Antwerp. I soon arrived on one of the chaussées with trees planted on each side, which conducted me there. On my arrival I made inquiry for the quarters of His Royal Highness the Duke, which I found to be in the Grande Place. Having dismounted, I waited a short time in an anteroom, when Colonel Jügel arrived and inquired with

some anxiety whether I had delivered my despatches to the Prince of Orange, and had brought an answer. I told him, and also stated the shameful conduct of the Hanöverian escort in leaving me, and my getting a peasant to pilot me to the Dutch outposts. The colonel desired me to remain until he had seen the Duke, and soon returning, said his Royal Highness wished to speak to me. On hearing this I confess I felt very nervous, particularly as I was covered with dust and perspiration. However, on entering the room, my fears soon subsided, in consequence of the gracious reception of the kind-hearted Duke. He made every inquiry respecting my expedition, and told me he would write to Count Walmoden to have the escort severely punished, and concluded by informing me, what made my heart leap with joy, that he should recommend me to the king for a lieutenancy. This I soon obtained, over the heads of two cornets that were with the depôt in England, and by this fortunate promotion I subsequently got without purchase the captain-lieutenancy and a troop in the Greys.

CHAP. XVIII.

FLIGHT OF WILD SWANS.—WILD SWAN SHOOTING.—ST. JOHN'S WILD SWAN SHOOTING.—MODE OF DRESSING THE SWAN.—AUTHOR SHOOTING A WILD SWAN.

"The swan, where northern rivers glide
Through the tall reeds that fringe their tide,
Floats graceful on her wing."—HEMANS.

"As rears her crest the ruffled swan,
And spurns the wave with wings of pride,
When pass the steps of stranger man,
Along the banks that bound her tide."—*The Giaour.*

THE Hooper or Wild Swan, known by the name of the whistling swan, is smaller than the white or tame swan, and is about five feet in length and seven in breadth, and weighs from fourteen to seventeen pounds. The bill is three inches long; from the base to the middle it is yellowish white, and from thence to the end black. The place bare of feathers, from the bill over the eye and eyelids, is yellow. The whole plumage in the full-grown birds is of a pure white, and next the skin they are clothed with a thick fine down. This species of wild fowl are inhabitants of the northern regions, seldom appearing in England, except quite to the north, and in Scotland,

except in severe winters, when flocks of six or seven are sometimes seen.

Martin mentions, that in October the hooper comes to Lingay, on the Western Isles, in great numbers, and continue there until March; a few may also be seen in some of the islands of the Orkneys, and they sometimes breed in the little islands of the freshwater lochs; but the greater part of them retire at the approach of spring; the inhabitants expecting a mild spring when these birds take an early departure. In the countries in which they remain during the summer and autumn months, they are usually found in small flocks, except in the pairing season, or at the commencement of winter. At the latter period they collect together in immense throngs, particularly in the extensive rivers and lakes of those countries which are thinly inhabited. At the commencement of the frost, the wild swans are known to associate in great numbers, and thus united, to use every effort to prevent the water from freezing, by constantly dashing it with their extended wings; and by this means they are enabled to remain in some favourite part of a lake or river which abounds with food; but when the severity of the weather deprives them of this sustenance, they take their flight high in the air, in divided and diminished numbers. They shape their course in search of milder climates, and at this period they are frequently seen in various parts of the British Isles, and in other warmer climates of Europe. In their flight, the swans follow so closely, that the bill of the one lies upon the tail of the other. The largest flocks of them are found in the expansive waters near Hudson's Bay, and Kamtschatka, Lapland, and Iceland. In Iceland these birds are objects of

chase; losing their feathers in August, so as to be unable to fly. The natives, at that season, come provided with dogs and active small horses, capable of passing nimbly over the boggy soil and marshes where they most resort. These birds are then so swift on their legs, that they will puzzle a tolerably quick horse to overtake them; but the greater number are caught by the dogs, that are taught to seize them by the neck. This throws them off their balance, and makes them an easy prey. Many are likewise shot and killed with clubs. The whistling of the wild swan, when it arrives in Iceland in the spring, is most welcome music to the ears of an Icelander, as it denotes the conclusion of his severe winter, and a release from his long tedious confinement. The flesh is highly esteemed by the Icelander, especially that of the young birds; so much so, that in summer or winter no entertainment is considered complete without a swan.

Their eggs, of which they lay four, and hatch them in June, are also esteemed delicious food, and they are so large, that one is sufficient for a man, without bread or any other addition. The Icelanders, as well as the Kamtschadales, dress their skins with the down on; sew them together, and make them into various sorts of clothing; and the covering of the legs, taken off whole, is used for purses, and is in appearance like shagreen.

The wild swan is an extremely wary bird, and it requires much caution, and some preparation, to be able to get within shot of them. In a punt, when the frost is severe, and large flakes of ice are floating about the water, this is a favourable time for the undertaking. The gunner, with his attendant, should be dressed in white, in caps and jacket, taking care to examine from what quarter the wind blows, so as not to have it behind

you; for as all wild fowls have an extremely acute sense of smell, there is little chance of getting a shot unless you get to windward. In these expeditions strict silence must be the order of the day; and as the distance on water is apt to deceive persons who have not had much practice in this kind of shooting, the signal for firing at the swans, when near enough, should be given by the boatmen, who are usually good judges, by a gentle pull of the jacket. To screen as much as possible from the sight of the long-necked birds, some large blocks of ice should be placed on the deck of the punt; but at night, when the sea is quite smooth, you may get as close to them as you may feel inclined. The gunner should never think of firing until the swans hold their heads up and swim together, which latter is a sure sign that they are going to take flight. Hearne, in speaking of the rapid flight of water-fowl, observes of the wild swan, that notwithstanding their size, these birds are so extremely swift on the wing, when in full feather, as to make them more difficult to shoot than almost any other, it being necessary, frequently, to take sight ten or twelve feet before their bills; this, however, is only when they are flying before the wind in a brisk gale, at which time they seldom fly at a less rate than a hundred miles an hour; but when flying across the wind or against it, they are not able to make any great progress.* Colonel Hawker mentions, "that on the Hampshire coast, in Keyhaven and Pennington, several wild fowl were sitting in large masses of ice, which when thawed, the whole harbour was in arms with shooters. Having a punt which drew less water than the others, it was therefore my lot to have the first chance. I therefore took the precaution of getting well round to windward; and when I had arrived

as much to windward as I dared go to wild fowl—having previously covered myself and my man with clean white linen, and a white night-cap, to appear the colour of the snow—we floated down among the small pieces of ice that were constantly drifting to leeward, and by these means had a couple in the boat, and another that afterwards dropped dead, just as the other punts were coming up." Colonel Hawker further remarks, "always to let a swan pass you, so as to shoot under his feathers, or you may as well fire at a wool-pack." "Hundreds of common swans are mistaken for hoopers; in hard weather they are driven from gentlemen's seats, and still more so from large swanneries, such as that at Abbotsbury, in Dorsetshire. They then frequently repair to the shore, and by congregating in flocks, and there getting driven about and shot at, become quite as wild as the real hoopers, from which they are difficult to be distinguished unless you hear them hoop. But when near enough to inspect the head, you can be no longer in doubt, as the naked skin above the bill, in the tame swan is black, and in the wild swan bright yellow. Under two years of age, the hoopers, like other cygnets, are not white, but more or less of a dull fawn colour, and then the yellow is much less brilliant, though still plain enough to distinguish them from swans of the tame species."

Mr. St. John is such a thorough, practical, and experienced sportsman, and recounts his adventures in shooting in such an interesting and pleasing manner, that I feel much pleasure in making an extract from his work.

"To-day, October 6th, we saw in the bay as many as fifty or sixty wild swans, evidently just arrived. We went home for swan-shot, Eley's cartridges, and other

munitions of war; but by the time we had got all in readiness to open a campaign on the fleet of snow-white birds, they all took flight. After sailing two or three times round the bay, and after an amazing deal of trumpeting and noise, they divided into separate parties, and flew off, some to the east and some to the west, towards their different feeding quarters. October 7th: my old garde-chasse insisted on my starting early this morning, *nolens volens*, to certain lochs six or seven miles off, in order, as he termed it, to take our satisfaction of the swans. I must say that it was a matter of very small satisfaction to me; the tramping in a sleety, rainy morning, through a most forlorn and hopeless-looking country, for the chance, and that a bad one, of killing a wild swan or two.

However, after a weary walk, we arrived at these desolate lochs. They consist of three pieces of water, the longest about three miles in breadth and one in width; the other two, which communicate with the largest, are much smaller and narrower, indeed scarcely two gunshots in width. For miles around them the country is flat, and intersected with swampy and sandy hillocks. In one direction the sea is only half a mile from the lochs, and in calm winter weather the wild fowl pass the daytime on the salt water, coming inland in the evenings to feed. As soon as we were in sight of the lochs, we saw the swans on one of the smaller pieces of water, some standing high and dry on the grassy islands, trimming their feathers after their long journey, and others feeding on the grassy weeds at the bottom of the loch, which in some parts was shallow enough to allow of their pulling up the plants, which they fed on as they swam about; while numbers of wild

ducks of different kinds, particularly widgeons, swarmed round them, and often snatched the pieces of grass from the swans as soon as they had brought them to the surface, to the great annoyance of the noble birds.

Our next step was to drive the swans away from the lochs they were on: it seemed a curious way of getting a shot, but as the old man seemed confident of the success of his plan, I very submissively acted according to his orders.

As soon as we moved them, they all made straight for the sea. "This won't do," was my remark. "Yes it will, though; they'll no stop there lang the day, wi' this great wind, but will a' be back before the clock chaps twa." "Faith, I should be glad to see any building that could contain a clock, and where we might take shelter," was my inward cogitation.

The old man, however, having delivered his prophecy, set to work making an ambuscade by the edge of the loch which the birds had just left, and pointed it out to me as my place of refuge from one o'clock to the hour the birds should arrive. In the meantime, we moved about in order to keep ourselves warm, as a more wintry day never disgraced the month of October. In less than half an hour we heard the signal cries of the swans, and soon saw them in a long undulating line fly over the low sand-hills which divided the sea from the largest loch, where they alighted.

My commander for the time being then explained to me that water in this loch was everywhere too deep for the swans to reach the bottom, in order to pull up the weeds on which they fed; and that at their feeding time, about two o'clock, they would without doubt fly over to the smaller lochs, and probably to the same from which

we had originally disturbed them. I was accordingly placed in my ambuscade, leaving the keeper at some distance to help me as opportunity offered. A cold comfortless time of it my retriever and myself had. About two o'clock, however, I heard the swans rise from the upper loch, and in a few minutes they all passed over my head; and after taking a short survey of our loch, luckily without seeing me, they all alighted at the end of it farthest from the place where I was ensconced, and quite out of shot; and they seemed more inclined to move away from me than come towards me. It was very curious to watch these wild birds as they swam about, quite unconscious of danger. Now came the able generalship of my keeper, who, seeing that they were inclined to feed at the other end of the loch, began to drive them towards me, at the same time taking great care not to alarm them enough to make them take flight; this he did by appearing at a long distance off, and moving about without approaching the birds, but as if he was pulling grass or engaged in some other labour. When the birds first saw him they all collected in a cluster, and giving a general low cry of alarm, appeared ready to take flight. This was the ticklish moment; but soon, outwitted by his manœuvres, they disported again, and busied themselves in feeding. I observed that frequently all their heads were under the water at once, except one; but invariably one bird kept his head and neck above water, perfectly erect, and carefully watching on every side to prevent their being taken by surprise; when he wanted to feed he touched any passer-by, who immediately relieved him in his guard, and he in his turn called upon some other swan to perform the same duty. After waiting some little

time, and closely watching the birds in all their graceful movements, sometimes having a swan within half a shot of me, but never getting two or three together, I thought of some of my assistant's instructions, which he had given me *en route* in the morning, and I imitated, as well as I could, the barking of a dog; immediately all the swans collected in a body, and looked round to see where the noise came from. I was not above forty yards from them; so, gently raising myself on my elbow, I pulled the trigger, aiming at a forest of necks. To my dismay the gun did not go off, the wet, or something else, having spoiled the cap. The birds were slow in rising, so without pulling the other trigger, I put on another cap, and starting up, fired right and left at two of the largest swans as they rose from the loch. The cartridge told well on one that fell dead into the water, the other flew off after the rest of the flock, but presently turned back, and after making two or three graceful sweeps over the body of his companion, fell headlong, perfectly dead, almost upon her body." *

A few years ago, being at Weymouth, I went with a party to Abbotsbury, chiefly to see an extensive swannery belonging to Lord Ilchester. The swans are not of the wild species, but a great number may be seen swimming and flying about over a large expanse of water, which has a communication with the sea, which they often frequent when it is tolerably calm. Lord Ilchester permits no one to fire or molest the noble birds, who remain all the year and breed in the spring. A

* The wild swan on the surface of the water is not so graceful as the tame one, more particularly in the bend of the neck; and it is a pleasing sight to see the tame swan swimming before the wind, with its large wings open, like a vessel directing its course with its studding-sails set.

gamekeeper who attended us pointed out to us the king and queen of the large flock of swans, and said they were very unsociable with their subjects, keeping them at all times at a respectful distance. This is rather a curious circumstance, but I have no doubt of its truth, as the gamekeeper had an opportunity of constantly watching the habits of the swans.

It may, perhaps, be interesting to know how young tame swans are fattened for the table at Norwich. Two young swans, about seven months old, are sent to some old men who reside in alms-houses. One of the swans is kept by the man, the other is made fat by being fed on four bushels of oats, for which the person who sends the swan pays two guineas. Preparatory to the bird being roasted, a beefsteak is put into its inside, which much improves the flavour of this noble dish. It should be basted during the whole time of cooking. Mr. S—— once sent a swan as a present to General Paterson, quite a *bon-vivant*, who gave the cook of the Duke of Sussex 5*l.* to dress it, and invited a party of fourteen to partake of this rare delicacy; twelve out of the fourteen decided that a swan was not worth eating, and that Mr. S—— had better send a turkey the next time he made a present. I have never tasted the flesh of the tame or wild swan, but see no reason why the latter should not be palatable, as they feed chiefly on aquatic plants, and certainly are not such foul feeders as wild ducks, which are excellent birds for the table.

The swans on the moat round the bishop's palace at Wells, come to be fed at the porter's lodge by the bridge. The porteress used to put the food upon a stone near the water, and when they came and found none, they used to tap with their bills upon the stone.

In order to the quicker hearing of the tapping, she put an old bell upon the stone, and they tapped upon this.

Next she bethought her of hanging up the bell with a string into the water. Then they came and pulled the string, and rang the bell for their food.

The ducks have learnt it from the swans, and the ringing is pretty continual.

During the severe winter of 1806 I resided in Norfolk, and one morning, about Christmas, the river which runs down to Norwich being only a quarter of a mile from our house, was nearly frozen over. I saw three hoopers or wild swans, pass over the house, directing their course to the river. I immediately loaded a single-barrelled gun with swan-shot, and on making a reconnaissance on the banks of the stream, I perceived the swans at some distance in the water. Fortunately, at that part there was rather an elevation of ground, which screened me from the sight of the swans; and by creeping on my hands and knees for a short distance, I was able to get about thirty yards from them undiscovered. I took aim at the head of one of them, as it would have proved useless to fire at the body. The shot took effect, killed the bird, and the other two flew away. I found some difficulty in getting him to the banks of the river. Having succeeded in this, it was no easy task to carry my heavy prize home. My nearest neighbour at Billingford was a Mr. Pouché, a Frenchman who had lived many years as valet-de-chambre to the late Mr. Dutton. I showed him the swan, and offered to make him a present of it, which he gratefully accepted; and having met him a few days afterwards, he told me that himself and family had lived nearly the whole week on

the flesh of the hooper, which they found excellent and not fishy, and that he had also amassed a large quantity of down from the body, and a supply of large quills from the wings. Until I heard this from Mr. Pouché, I was not aware that a wild swan unfattened would have proved such a palatable dish for the table; but we know that almost every bird, down to a swallow or robin-redbreast, is acceptable to a Frenchman.

CHAP. XIX.

THE BITTERN.—BREEDING OF THE BITTERN.—WILD GEESE.—THE FLIGHT OF WILD GEESE.—BRENT GEESE.

" But the lark's shrill pipe shall come,
At the daybreak from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy hollow."
Lady of the Lake. Canto 1.

——— " driving sleets
Deform the day delightless, so that scarce
The bittern knows his time, with bill engulfed,
To shake the sounding marsh."—THOMSON'S *Winter.*

THE bittern has been, and perhaps not improperly, called by many " the bird of desolation." We find its name in Holy Writ about 2000 years ago; the Prophet Isaiah, in his threat against Babylon, says, " I will make it a possession of the bittern, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction " (ch. xiv. v. 23.); and again (ch. xxxiv. v. 11.), in prophecies against God's enemies, " But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it, the owl also and raven shall dwell in it;" and the very name of the bittern conveys to the imagination the idea of solitude and barrenness. As Providence

leads by instinct every creature to those situations in which they can best find their food, so the bittern is only to be met with in the low dreary swamps, where the stagnant water, choked with reeds, affords a hiding-place for the water-newt and the frog, and the bulrushes provide him concealment.

The bittern shuns the habitation of mankind; it remains with us the whole year, and in the present system of drainage so extensively carried on, and with lands formerly swamps and morasses brought into cultivation, the bittern is less seen, and seeks in more secluded and retired scenes a more congenial retreat. The bittern is seldom found in company, but at the period of breeding the male and female birds seek some sandy spot in the fens, and here they form a flat rude nest, usually on the ground. The female lays four or five eggs of a light brown colour, concealed from observation by the rushes and the reeds. The old bird sits whilst hatching, keeping a sharp look-out to watch the approach of a human footstep or a bird of prey. The plumage of the bittern may compete with that of most of our British birds. The prevalent colour is a pale yellow, richly variegated with black. The feathers are mostly very long, and the disciples of Isaac Walton are well acquainted with the success which the hackle of this bird ensures to the fly-fisher. The young are hatched in twenty-five days, and are naked and ugly, appearing almost all legs and neck, and cannot venture out till after being twenty days hatched, during which the old birds feed them with slugs, frogs, &c.

This bird is not, like the heron, destructive to the finny race, his food being principally water-rats, frogs, newts, and other aquatic reptiles. The hawks, which plunder the nests of most of the water-fowls, seldom dare to at-

tack that of the bittern, the old birds being always so vigilant in defence of their offspring. In February and March the males make a deep lowing noise morning and evening, but which ceases after the breeding season. This sound was formerly believed to be made while the bird plunged its bill into the mud, as Thomson observes; but it appears to be an erroneous opinion that the bittern never eats fish, for Daniel says "that Latham remembered to have seen two middle-sized trouts taken perfectly whole from the stomach of a bittern." In the autumn it may be sometimes seen to ascend to a great height in the air. In soaring thus aloft its movements are spiral, making an unusual cry, different from that which is heard in the spring when put up from amongst the reeds and rushes. As it flies heavily, it is an easy shot, and if only wounded will make a determined defence with its bill and claws. When a sportsman goes to pick up a wounded bird, he should be extremely cautious how he stoops down, in order to prevent the bird attacking his eyes, whilst lying on his back, to defend himself. A gentleman once wounded a bittern, which fell on the ice, and made such a desperate resistance to his dogs, that he was obliged to kill it with his second barrel.

In the reign of King Henry the Eighth the flesh of the bittern was considered a great delicacy. The flesh has nothing of the fishy taste of the heron, and is somewhat similar, but superior, to that of the hare.

The price of this bird in a poulterer's shop was about ten shillings; but as they are now become extremely scarce, I do not think at present they could be had at that price. The hind claw, which is extremely long, was once conceived to be a great preservative of the teeth

and used as a toothpick, mounted in gold or silver. The bittern is rather smaller than the common heron, and is in length two feet six inches, the bill brown, beneath inclining to green, and is four inches long; irides yellow; the head feathers are long, and those of the neck loose and waving; the crown of the head black, the feathers on the back forming a kind of pendent crescent; the lower jaw on each side dusky. The plumage is beautifully variegated; the ground yellow, palest beneath, and marked with numerous bars, streaks, and zigzag lines of black. The feathers of the breast are very long and loose; the legs pale green, long and slender, and the inner edge of the middle claw serrated, for the better holding of its prey. The female is less, darker coloured, and the feathers on the neck and head are shorter and less flowing than those of the male.

In extensive fens where the reeds and rushes are high, it is advisable, in order to find the bittern, to beat the fen with a steady pointer, for they often lie so close as to allow the dog to point them. On those occasions be cautious not to shoot too soon, for as the bittern flies heavily, without this precaution you would not get a good shot.

There was shot in the winter of 1856, in the township of Tonge, within a mile and half of Bolton, a bittern or wiredrum of beautiful plumage, two feet high. None had ever been seen before in that neighbourhood. It had been seen perched on a tree during a severe frost.

The greylag, or wild goose, weighs about ten pounds; the length is two feet nine inches, the breadth five feet, which is our largest species of wild fowl, except the hooper or wild swan. In 1799 one was shot at Horning Ferry which weighed twenty-three pounds.

The bill is large and elevated, of a yellowish flesh colour, with the nail white; the head and neck are cinereous, mixed with dusky yellow; the hind part of the neck of a pale grey, rather striped, and at the base of a brownish grey; breast and belly whitish, clouded with grey, or ash colour; back and primaries grey, the last tipped with black and edged with white; secondaries black, grey only at their base; lesser coverts dusky white, the middle row deep cinereous, slightly edged with white; the tail coverts and vent feathers of a pure white; middle feathers of the tail dusky, tipped with white; the exterior almost entirely white; the legs flesh coloured; claws black. This species is found in our fens, and it is generally supposed not to migrate, as in some countries on the continent, but breed in our fens. They sit thirty days, and hatch eight or nine young, which are often taken, and are considered very good for the table, and are easily domesticated. Daniel mentions that he took two broods of young wild geese in one season, which he turned down amongst tame ones. Both parties were at first very shy of each other, but they soon began to associate, and in a short time became very good friends. The old geese that are shot are sold, but their flesh is coarse. They unite in large flocks during winter, changing their station in search of food, and are very destructive to the growing corn in the fields where they happen to halt in their migratory excursions. At these times they are extremely wary and vigilant, and have always a sentinel on the watch, who, in case of danger, gives a warning whistle to those that are feeding; and as they feed in the day it is extremely difficult to get within shot of them, for the instant they hear the whistle they erect their heads and take to flight.

The flight of wild geese is always, excepting in fogs, very elevated; their motion is smooth, accompanied with little rustling, and the play of the wing seems never to exceed two or three inches. The regularity in which they are marshalled makes one suppose that they possess an intelligence superior to other birds, which migrate in disorderly bodies. The arrangement strictly observed by the geese is at once calculated to keep the ranks entire, to break the resistance of the air, and to diminish the exertion of the bird. They form two oblique lines like the letter V, or if their number be small, only one line; frequently they amount to forty or fifty, each keeping his rank with admirable exactness. The chief, who occupies the point of the angle, and first cleaves the air, retires when fatigued to the rear, and the rest by turns assume the station of the van. Pliny mentions the wonderful harmony and regularity which prevail in the flight of wild geese, and remarks that, unlike the cranes and the storks, which journey in the obscurity of the night, the geese are seen pursuing their route in the day.

Geese seem to be general inhabitants of the globe. On the American continent they are found from Hudson's Bay, where they breed in the plains along the coast, moult in July, and being then unable to fly, are easily taken or killed by the inhabitants. Some are reserved alive and fed on corn for winter stock, and it is singular that the young ones seldom learn how to feed on the corn unless some of the old ones are kept with them. They frequent South Carolina during winter, their attraction being the rice grounds, where they glean the droppings of the harvest. The greylag is the origin of domestic geese. It is the only species the Britons could take young and

familiarise. The mallard comes within the same description, and is the source from whence the tame breed of ducks is derived. As the management of tame geese yields considerable profit, it will warrant giving some account of them. They are kept in great numbers in the fens of Lincolnshire; one individual will be the owner of one thousand old geese, each of which it is calculated will rear seven, so that at the end of the year he will be master of 8000. Geese, in general, breed only once in the year, but sometimes they have two hatches, if well kept. The time of sitting is about thirty days. They will also produce eggs sufficient for three broods, if the eggs are taken away in succession. During the breeding season these birds are lodged in the same houses with their owners, and even in their bed-chambers. Three wicker pens are placed one above another in every apartment; each bird has its separate lodge, divided from the other, which it keeps possession of during the time of sitting. A person called a gozzard attends the flock, and twice a-day drives the whole to water, then brings them back to their habitations, helping those that live in the upper storeys to their nests, without ever misplacing a single bird. These geese are plucked five times in the year; the same operation takes place in Germany, but I am uncertain what number of times. The first plucking is at Lady Day for feathers and quills, and the same is renewed, for feathers only, four times more between that and Michaelmas. They say the old geese submit quietly to the operation, but the young ones are very noisy and unruly. Even goslings of six weeks old are not spared, their tails being plucked to habituate them, as it is said, to the operation. About ten pluckers are employed, each with a coarse

apron up to his chin. Should the weather be subsequently cold, numbers of geese perish from this barbarous custom.

Brent geese frequent our shores in the winter; in Holland every eating-house is full of them. In Ireland they are called barnacles, and appear in great numbers in August, and leave that country in March. The Brent geese feed on a kind of long grass growing in the water, preferring the root and some part above it, which they frequently dive for, bite off, and leave the upper part to drift on shore. They abound near Londonderry, Belfast, and the coast of Wexford, are taken in flight time by nets placed across the river, and are much esteemed for their delicacy. When I was in Ireland in 1805—6 as inspecting field officer of the yeomanry corps of the counties of Carlow and Waterford, the barnacle was a favourite dish both for dinner and supper, and I found them excellent.* In some seasons they have resorted to the coast of Picardy in France, in such prodigious flocks as to prove a pest to the inhabitants, especially in the winter of 1740, when these birds spoiled all the corn near the sea coasts by tearing it up by the roots. A general war was therefore declared against them, and carried on in earnest by destroying them in every possible way; but their numbers were so prodigious that this availed but little; nor were the inhabitants relieved from this scourge until the north wind which brought them ceased to blow.

* At this period in Ireland we usually dined at four or half-past four o'clock, and at nine sat down to a hot supper, where I have seen a roast turkey, and in the middle of the table a tureen containing hot water, with floating marrow, and generally a dish of woodcocks or snipes, and this repast was finished with hot whisky punch.

The winter of 1802 brought amazing quantities to our shores and rivers. A punt shooter upon the river between Maldon and Bradwell killed seventy-four of these birds at one shot*; and such was the abundance that they were sold upon the spot for two shillings the couple, although the price given by the poulterers in London for them was from three to four shillings a-piece for each.

The bill of this bird is short, black, and elevated; inside light hazel; the head, neck, and upper part of the breast black; on each side of the hindmost part of the neck is a white spot; the lower part of the breast, the scapulars, and coverts of the wings are ash-coloured, clouded with a deeper shade; the quills black; the feathers above and below the tail itself dusky black, and the shape a little rounded; legs black. The female differs in having the plumage less bright, and in young birds the white on the sides of the neck is small or wholly deficient. They retire to breed in the extreme north, returning southward in autumn; fly in the shape of a wedge, with great clamour, and feed on water plants, berries, and worms. They are easily tamed, and when fat are very delicate food.

* With a swivel-gun.

CHAP. XX.

THE WILD DUCK: ITS HABITS. — DECOY FOR WILD DUCK. — TRICKS OF DECOY MEN. — TEAL. — WIDGEON. — RUFFS AND REEVES. — LAPWING. — WHEATEARS.

"Tell me, fellow-creatures, why
At my presence that you fly?
Why disturb your social joys,
Parent, filial, kindred ties?
Common friend to you and me,
Nature's gifts to all are free:
Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,
Busy feed or wanton lave;
Or beneath the shelt'ring rock,
Bide the surging billows' shock."

BURNS *to the Wild Duck.*

IT is not necessary to give a description of the wild duck, as the bird is so well known. There is little difference between the wild and tame duck, and to ascertain the old from the young a feather should be plucked from the wing, and if bloody, they are young birds, but those of the old are at the extremities hard. The neck of the wild duck is slenderer than that of the tame one, the foot smaller, and the nails of a darker colour, and the web of the foot finer. The wild duck is not so large as the tame. Its usual weight is about two pounds and a half, but some have been taken in decoys, where they were well fed, that weighed three pounds and a half. Wild ducks frequent the marshes

and rivers of this kingdom, and in the former great numbers are bred. They pair in spring, and they lay from ten to sixteen eggs. The time of incubation is about thirty days. As soon as hatched the young take to the water; it is generally about the month of May, but the growth of their wing is very slow, and they are unable to fly before August; and sometimes in the summer, for want of better sport, I have gone out flapper shooting—so called from the young ducks being only able to flap with their wings two or three feet above the surface of the water.

The wild duck is an artful bird and difficult to approach. I have seen on some of the large lakes in South America vast numbers of wild fowl of different species. The royal duck, whose plumage is very beautiful, is considerably larger than the common wild duck; and such is the prodigious quantity of wild fowl that breed on these lakes, that when I have been sometimes riding on horseback, the atmosphere has been to a certain space darkened by their flight. It was very difficult to get a shot at them, as there were no boats or punts to navigate these lakes, and in the daytime these wary birds kept always at a good distance from the land. However, the Indians manage to supply the market tolerably well with wild fowl, being great adepts in their contrivances to take them.* The wild duck does not always make its nest

* The Indians make small perpendicular bands of rushes, which they allow to float about the lake for some time, that the wild fowl may be accustomed to see them without alarm. When the wind is rather fresh, and a considerable ripple on the water, they put one of these bands on their head, disguising their face as much as possible, and leaving only a small space for the eyes and mouth, to breathe. Having fastened a bag round the body, they enter the lake, and being most expert swim-

near the water, and there are several instances in which their nests have been found in the trees. Mr. Tunstall mentions a wild duck's nest being found at Etchingham in Sussex upon an oak tree five and twenty feet from the ground. The duck was sitting upon nine eggs, which were supported by small twigs, laid cross wise. One is quite puzzled to conceive how the old bird could possibly contrive to take the young ones to the ground. I suppose, like dogs and cats, who frequently carry their young in their mouths, the ducks adopt the same plan.* The gamekeepers of Mr. Eyre of Passop, Derbyshire, in 1801 observed a wild duck fly out of a large oak, in which the year before a hawk had made its nest. Upon examining the nest it was found in complete repair, and in it the duck had recently laid two eggs.

In Scotland St. John says "that they mostly breed about the most lonely lochs and pools in the hills. He had seen the wild ducks during the breeding season very far up among the hills. A few hatch and rear their young about the rough ground and mosses near the sea; but these become more scarce every year. He mentions another example of a wild duck having made her nest in an old pollard oak. His curiosity being excited by seeing the bird fly out of the tree, he

mers, they glide through the water without almost any perceptible motion, taking care to keep to the leeward of the wild fowl, and when they approach rather near to them they stop their breath, as the sense of smelling is so very acute in these birds. As soon as they get within reach of a wild duck they take him gently by the legs pull him under water, and put him into the bag; and in this singular manner they contrive frequently to fill the bag without alarming the other wild fowls.

* It has been said that when she breeds far from the water, the old duck takes her young in her beak or between her legs to the water.

examined it and found she had a nest built of sticks and grass, containing six eggs, placed at the junction of the branches and main stem. On carefully measuring the height, he found the nest was exactly fifteen feet from the ground. As soon as hatched the young ones take to the water, and it is very amusing to see the activity and quickness which the little fellows display in catching insects and flies as they skim along the surface of the water, led on by the parent bird, who takes the greatest care of them, bustling about with all the hurry and importance of a barn-door hen. Presently she gives a low warning quack, as a hawk or carrion crow passes in a suspicious manner over them. One cry is enough; away all the little ones dart into the rushes screaming and fluttering, while the old bird, with head flat on the water and upturned eye, slowly follows them, but not until she sees them all out of danger. After a short time, if the enemy has disappeared, the old bird peers cautiously from her covert, and if she makes up her mind that all is safe, she calls forth her offspring again to feed and sport in the open water."

The number of wild ducks taken in decoys is amazing; these birds are generally contracted for, including widgeons, teals, &c., by the poulterers in London and other provincial towns, at so much per dozen—many years since at eighteen shillings a dozen, but the price is increased to four and twenty or even thirty shillings a dozen. Decoys for taking wild ducks are not so numerous as formerly, on account of the active system of drainage. They are generally situated in a marsh, so as to be closely surrounded with weeds and rushes, in order to keep the pond as quiet as possible, (for wild

ducks will not frequent any water unless this is done,) being so shy and suspicious in its nature. In the decoy pond wild ducks sleep the greater part of the day. ' As soon as the evening sets in, the birds become on the alert, and feed during the night; on a calm evening the noise of their circuitous flights is heard at a distance. In Somersetshire this rising is called " rodding." The decoy ducks (which are either bred in the pond-yard or in the marshes adjacent, and which, although they fly abroad, regularly return for food to the pond, and are mixed with tame ones which never quit the pond, and are taught for this purpose) are fed with hempseed, oats, and buckwheat. A man must be constantly employed to attend the decoy. Every four years the poles and nets will be new, as in the intervening years they will be replaced; some at one time, some at another, so as to be all renewed in the above period. Reeds for repairing screens, Dutch turf, rent, decoy birds, and many etceteras, are also to be included in the expenses of the decoy-pond, and the repayment all depends upon the haunt of fowl which take to the pond. In working, the hempseed is thrown over the screens in small quantities, to allure the fowl forward into the pipes; of which there are several leading up a narrow ditch, that closes at last with a funnel-net. Over these pipes, which grow narrower from the first entrance, is a continued arch of netting suspended on hoops. It is necessary to have a pipe for almost every wind that can blow, as upon this circumstance it depends which pipe the fowl will take to; and the decoy-man always keeps to leeward of the wild fowl, that his effluvia should not reach them; and this he likewise takes further care to prevent, by keeping a piece

of Dutch turf lighted in his hand*, for such is the acute sense of smelling which wild fowl possess, that should the pond be full of fowl, if they scented a man, not a bird would remain in it a moment. Along each pipe are placed reed screens at certain intervals, which protect the decoy-man from being seen until he pleases to show himself, or the birds are passed up the pipe, to which they are led by the trained birds, who know the whistle of the decoy-man, or are enticed by the hemp-seed. A dog, which is generally preferred to be of a red colour, is sometimes used, who is taught to play backwards and forwards between the screens, at the direction of his master. The fowl, roused by this new object, advance towards it, whilst the dog is playing still nearer to the entrance of the pipes, until at last the decoy-man appears from behind the screens; and the wild fowl, not daring to pass by him, and unable to escape upwards on account of the net covering upon the hoops, press forward to the end of the funnel-net, which terminates upon the land, where a person is ready to receive them and break their necks; in doing which much dexterity is required. The trained birds return back past the decoy-man into the pond again, until a repetition of their services is required. A side wind is the

* A rather ludicrous circumstance took place when L— S— and her daughters were staying with the late Marquis of Hertford, at his residence in Suffolk. It was proposed one day that the ladies should witness how the wild ducks were caught at the decoy. On their arrival one of the gamekeepers presented to one of the young ladies a piece of lighted Dutch turf, telling her it was to prevent the ducks smelling her. On this she became very indignant, and asked the keeper whether he supposed she had such a strong effluvium about her as to alarm the wild duck; but on assuring her that every one was obliged to have a piece of turf, she was pacified, and took it in her hand.

best to watch the birds. The general season for catching is from the latter end of October until February. The taking of them earlier is prohibited by the Act 10 George II. c. 32, which forbids it from June 1st to October 1st, under a penalty of five shillings for each bird destroyed in that space. Formerly it was customary to have in the fens an annual driving of young ducks before they took wing. Numbers of people assembled, who beat a vast tract and forced the birds into a net placed on the spot where the sport was to terminate. In this destructive sport upwards of a hundred dozen have been taken at once. This practice, being supposed detrimental, has been abolished by Act of Parliament. A decoy in some seasons is astonishingly lucrative. In 1795 the Tillingham decoy, in Essex, at that time in the occupation of Mr. Mascall, netted, after every expense, upwards of 800*l.*, and the only birds taken were duck and mallard. In 1799, 10,000 head of widgeon, teal, and wild duck, were caught in a decoy belonging to the Rev. Bate Dudley, in Essex.

The tricks which the decoy-men employ to destroy the haunts of the birds in each other's ponds are various, and as well calculated to produce the mischievous effects they intend as can well be devised: such as putting a wounded bird or two into the pond. Not a bird will pipe until they are removed; and the natural shyness of the bird is so increased by the pain of his wound, that it takes sometimes two or three days to secure him and restore tranquillity. A second manœuvre is thrusting a feather through the nostrils of a wild fowl and launching it into the decoy; here again not a fowl can be caught until this deformed stranger is got rid of. A third, and perhaps the most decisive, is starting train oil into the

brook or rill which supplies the pond at some distance from it: some portion of this will be carried by the current into the decoy, and in an instant the fowl, however numerous, quit, and will not resume their haunt until every taint is removed.

It is a pleasing sight to see on a fine sheet of water, in a nobleman or gentleman's park, numerous wild fowl, some on the water, and others taking circuitous flights, as may be seen from the ancient mansion of my old friend Sir Charles Knightley, Bart., at Fawsley, Northamptonshire. A gun is never allowed to be fired near this piece of water; and the wild ducks, widgeon and teal remaining quiet and unmolested, become, comparatively speaking, tame, and you may walk within a short distance of the water without the wild fowl taking flight. The Baronet's table is well supplied with wild fowl, which the gamekeepers shoot in the adjacent marl pits and small rivulets. A wild duck when fat and in good condition is a most excellent bird; and to make them more palatable, cut each side of the breast into small slices, and put a small quantity of cayenne pepper between them, and squeeze some of the juice of a lemon on them. A wild duck also makes an excellent *devil*. It is a very easy bird to shoot, as they fly straight and not very fast. Foxes have been known to be very successful in catching wild fowl at night in a decoy, when the birds approach to the margin of the water. To effect this he lies perfectly motionless on the bank of the pond, as if dead, and when the birds come unconsciously within reach he makes his spring, and seldom fails to secure a good supper. Birds of prey are also sometimes a great annoyance to a decoy, by alarming and driving away the wild fowl.

The teal, when fat, is one of the most delicate birds that forms part of a second course of a dinner party, and, considering how small they are, they fetch a high price in the London market. The male teal weighs about twelve ounces, the female nine; the length is fourteen inches, the breadth twenty-three; the bill is a dark lead colour, tipped with black; iride pale hazel; from the bill to the hind part of the head is a brown bar of glossy changeable green, bounded on the under part with a cream-coloured white line, and edged on the upper side with a pale brown; the rest of the head and the upper part of the neck are of a deep reddish chestnut; fore part of the neck and breast a dusky white, marked with roundish black spots; belly white, middle of the vent black, the wing coverts brown, quills dusky; the exterior webs of the lesser marked with a vivid green spot, above that another of black, and edged with white; the legs dull lead colour.

The female is of a brownish ash colour; the lower part of the neck and sides over the wing brown, edged with white. The wing has a green spot like the male, the belly white; it was at no very distant period supposed not to breed in England; but Mr. White, in his "Natural History of Selborne," has established the fact that they do breed in this country, as some young teal were brought to him which were taken in a pond near Walmer Forest. It has also been ascertained that they breed in the mosses about Carlisle; and Mr. Daniel turned some out on the ponds at Waltham Hall, which he received from the decoys, after having them pinioned, which also bred there. In France, where it stays throughout the year, it makes its nest in April, among the rushes on the edges of ponds, which is composed of

the tenderest stalks of the rushes, with the addition of pith and a quantity of feathers. The nest is of a large size, and placed on the water, so as to rise and fall with it; the eggs, to the number of from twelve to seventeen, are as large as those of a pigeon, of a dirty white, marked with small hazel spots. According to St. John, they sometimes hatch their young a considerable distance from the water, and lead the young brood immediately to it. He says: "Whilst riding in Ross-shire I saw an old teal with eight newly hatched young ones cross the road. The youngsters could not climb up the opposite bank, and young and old all squatted flat to allow me to pass. I got off my horse, and lifted all the little birds and carried them a little distance down the road to a ditch, for which I concluded they were making; the old bird all the time fluttering about me, and frequently coming within reach of my riding whip. The part of the road where I first saw them passed through thick fir wood with rank heather, and it was quite a puzzle to me how such small animals, scarcely bigger than a half-grown mouse, could have got along through it. The next day I saw them all enjoying themselves in a small pond at some little distance off, where a brood of teal appeared every year."

The teal feeds on the grass and weeds which grow on the edges of the waters it frequents; it is also fond of the seed of rushes, and small fish, and the various insects found in stagnant pools. In Scotland the teal are rarely seen in the winter, but in the spring they come in considerable numbers to breed in the swamps and lochs. The teal flies with great swiftness, rising suddenly into the air when disturbed, and dropping suddenly after taking a short flight, much in the same way

as the snipe. In the spring the drake has a peculiar whistle, at other times their note is a low quack, and it has been remarked that a pair of teal, if allowed to remain undisturbed, will return year after year to the same pool to breed.

The teal is found to the south of the Caspian Sea, and in all parts of Europe it is esteemed a very delicate bird. Hearne states that a considerable number of teal are found near the seacoast in Hudson's Bay, but are more numerous in the interior parts of the country, flying in such large flocks that he has frequently killed twelve or fourteen at one shot, and the Indians also kill a great many at a shot. At their first arrival they are in bad condition; he describes the teal as the most prolific of the water-fowl at Hudson's Bay, having more than once seen old ones swimming at the head of seventeen young ones, when not much larger than walnuts. The teal remains in this part as long as the weather is sufficiently open; before they take their flight to the south they become exceedingly fat, delicately white, and are considered a great luxury by the colonists.

The widgeon is not so delicate a bird for the table as the teal; it is twenty inches in length, and weighs about twenty-three ounces; bill narrow, of a bluish lead colour, an inch and half long, tip black; the top of the head is cream colour, over the bill almost white, head and neck light bay; the plumage of the back and sides under the wings undulated with black and white lines; wing coverts brown, more or less mixed with white, and in some birds almost white; the greater quill feathers dusky; the outermost webs of the middle feathers of a fine green, the tips black, the last striped with black

and white; the two middle feathers of the tail are longer than the others, black and sharp pointed, the rest ash coloured; the belly white; legs dusky lead colour.

The head of the female is of a rusty brown, spotted with black; the back is of a deep brown, edged with a paler; the tips of the lesser quill feathers white; the belly white.

This species is common in most parts of Europe, and some are taken as far to the eastward as Egypt, from the middle to the end of November, by nets in the marshes before the departure of the waters. It is also found at Aleppo, during the winter, in plenty; and also on the borders of the Caspian Sea. During the winter they are numerous in various parts of England, and are caught in the decoys.

There is little difference in the plumage of both sexes until the following spring after hatching (as is the case in the pintail, the gadwall, and the shoveller, which are all grey, and have no fine plumage); but the males about March gain their full plumage, but lose it again the end of July, and with it, in some measure, their note, which they regain, and always use during their flight, and which may be heard a considerable distance, sounding like the fife. Great numbers of widgeon are shot by the fishermen during the winter, for their livelihood, in the back waters which run up from the sea between the towns of Poole and Wareham, in Dorsetshire. They use flat bottom boats, and have generally two long guns; with one they shoot at the wild fowl feeding on what they find on the mud, and give them a discharge; with the second gun, when they rise. This is a most arduous way for these poor men to get

their livelihood, and the nights are sometimes so excessively cold as to oblige them to leave their dogs at home, which they require to recover the wounded birds.

The mode of approaching wild fowl is as follows:—We will suppose a sportsman who is so keen in the pursuit of wild fowl shooting as to hold cheap the inclemency of a winter night, and that he has the fit-out of a good punt, guns, and gear, and has located himself either in Poole Harbour, Dorsetshire, the shores of the Solent Sea, or in some part either in the north of Scotland or Ireland. One of the most essential points in this kind of sport is to make yourself thoroughly master of the ground over which you are to shoot, by ascertaining the creeks, and whether they lead to the higher parts of the ground, to which all wild fowl will resort at low water, as being the farthest removed from danger. You should also make yourself acquainted with the depth of water, particularly at low water, as this will often save yourself and man much disappointment and fruitless labour. When a "company" of widgeon or a "skein" of geese are observed off the shore, the gunner must, in the first place, consider how they are to be approached. There are one or two things to be observed which are, indeed, essential in order to make a successful shot at these birds. First, I must observe, all fowl have a very keen sense of smelling, and therefore you must never think of going to them with the wind directly behind them, and blowing in the direction of the birds, or you will be sure to make them take flight. You must contrive to have the wind on the starboard or port bow of the boat, and to be propelled in deep water b sculling with an oar, and in shallow water by "setting,"—that is, by pushing the boat forward with a sett pole, and on no

account to show yourself by moving, and not to ask questions of your man as to distance, &c. Now, as to the distance for firing, the novice should rely on the opinion of his attendant, whom we will suppose to be a man well skilled in this art, as shooting on the water is very deceptive, and who should, by previous arrangement, give him the signal to fire, either by touching him gently with his hand or foot. Care should be taken to approach the birds when feeding on the ground ebb—that is, when the tide first leaves the ground; as their attention is naturally taken up with it alone. A breeze of wind is indispensable, as it drowns any noise occasioned by the propelling of the punt, and it also renders her less easily discerned. I may now mention that all fowl are more easily approached if the gunner should be fortunate enough to get a high bank or clump of trees at his back, with the wind as before stated; he can then hardly fail to make a heavy shot.

With respect to the habits of wild fowl in general, all the geese tribe feed by day only. Widgeon, teal, mallard, pintail, &c., feed both by day and night on the tide. When the sea is quite smooth, you may get as close to them as you may feel inclined. Widgeon and mallard are not easily approached by day, except in very severe weather, but on a moonlight or bright starlight night you may readily distinguish them on the feeding ground, as also by the sharp shrill note of the cock and the deep "purrs" of the hen widgeon. In this sort of shooting much patience is required to ensure success. In the expedition you must also consult the weather, tide, and moon, and it is rare that all these unite to assist the sportsman in his undertaking. The wild swan is seldom seen in these

southern latitudes, except in very severe weather, and when there is much ice collected in the harbours.

Of ruffs and reeves, the former are the male birds, and the reeves the females. The ruffs, according to Buffon, are very pugnacious. He remarks that they not only contend with each other in single rencontres, but sometimes advance in order of battle, and these hostile armies are composed entirely of males, which in this, as in a variety of species of birds, are much more numerous than females. These battles are fought with great obstinacy, which nature seems to countenance, by the great disproportion between the ruffs and reeves. The ruffs assume such variety of plumage that it is scarcely possible to see two alike, but the great length of feathers, from which they take their name, at once distinguish them from all other birds. The feathers which compose this peculiarity swell out in a remarkable manner, not unlike the ruff worn by our ancestors; a portion of these feathers stand over each eye, imitating ears; and this curious bunch of feathers grows from the back of the neck, spreading wide on both sides. This tuft, and the feathers of the ruff, are frequently of different colours in the same bird. The ruff is of as many and as various dyes as there are birds that wear it. Latham observes that of whatever hue the ruff may be the breast differs very little, and the transverse markings on the upper part of the plumage somewhat correspond, the ground tint being mostly brown. The tufts in the males is not a warlike ornament only, but is a sort of defensive armour, which wards off the blows by the length, and stiffness, and closeness of the feathers; they bristle in a threatening manner when the bird makes an attack, and the colours form the chief distinction between

the individuals. In some these feathers are rufous, in others grey, some white, some of a fine violet black, broken with rufous spots. The white is most rare. In its form too the tuft is as variable as the colour, during the whole time of its growth.

This beautiful ornament drops when these birds moult, about the end of June, as if nature reserved the decoration and armour for the season of love and of war. After the time of incubation the long feathers fall off, the caruncles shrink in under the skin, so as not to be discerned, and their place is occupied by feathers; the males are no longer by their plumage to be distinguished, and both sexes abandon the place where they bred.

The feathers that have an uniformity of colouring in the ruff are the coverts of the wings, which are brown, inclining to ash colour; the feathers on the breast, which are often black or dusky; the four exterior feathers of the tail, which are of a cinereous brown; and the four middle ones, which are barred with black and brown. The quills are dusky, the lower belly, vent, and upper tail coverts, white. The length of the ruff is one foot, breadth two feet, and it weighs, when taken, about seven ounces and a-half. The bill is black towards the end, and more than an inch long; yellowish-red at the base; the irides are hazel; the whole face covered with numerous yellow or red pimples; the legs in all are yellow, or yellowish-red; claws black.

They do not recover the long neck feathers till after their return to the fens the spring following; it is then they regain those characteristic feathers, and at the same time the pear-shaped pimples break out in great numbers on their face, above the bill. The stags or

male birds of the first year want these marks, and have been sometimes mistaken for a new species of tringa; but by the colour of the wing coverts and the middle feathers of the tail they may be easily known; the older the birds, the more numerous are the pimples, and the fuller and longer the ruffs. Until the second season, and also from the end of June until the breeding-time commences, the plumage of both sexes is similar.

The reeves never change the colour of their feathers, which are pale brown, the middle of each feather being dusky, in some parts almost black; the back spotted with black, slightly edged with white; the legs of a pale dull yellow: in length the reeve is ten inches, in breadth nineteen, and its usual weight when taken is about four ounces. In the Leverian museum is a variety of the reeve, wholly white except the wings, which have the usual marking of the feathers, but are rather paler.

These birds are found early in the spring, in the fens of Lincolnshire, particularly the West Fen, the Isle of Ely, the East Riding of Yorkshire, and disappear about Michaelmas; they also visit a place called Martin-mere, in Lancashire, the latter end of March or beginning of April, but do not continue there above three weeks. It is uncertain where they spend the winter; by their regular appearance upon our coasts in the spring, and their stay for two or three months, it would seem that they seek a temperate climate; and if naturalists had not assured us that they came from the north, we might justly draw the opposite inference that they arrive from the south. The reeves lay four white eggs, marked with large rusty spots, in a knot of grass, the beginning

of May, and sit nearly a month. Fowlers are said to avoid taking the reeves, not only because of their being so much smaller than the ruff, but that the breed may be increased. Soon after their arrival the ruffs begin to hill—that is, to collect on some dry bank, near a splash of water, in expectation of the reeves, which resort to them. Each male possesses himself of a small piece of ground, which it runs round till the grass is worn away and nothing but a circle is left.

When a reeve alights the ruffs immediately fall to fighting; they use the same action in fighting as a game-cock, place their bills on the ground, and spread their ruffs. When a fowler discovers one of these hills, he places his net overnight, which is of the same kind as those they call clap or day-nets, only it is generally single, and is about fourteen yards long and four broad. At daybreak he resorts to his stand, at the distance of one, two, three, or four hundred yards from the nets; the later the season the shyer the birds, and he must keep the further off; he then makes his pull, taking such birds as are within reach; after that he places his stuffed birds or *stales* to entice those that are continually traversing the fens. A fowler has been known to catch forty-four birds at the first haul and the whole taken in one morning were six dozen. When the stales are set, seldom more than two or three are taken at a time. An experienced fowler will take forty or fifty dozen in a season; they are fattened for the table with bread and milk, hempseed, and sometimes boiled wheat; but if they are required to be fattened quickly, sugar is added, which in a fortnight makes them a lump of fat; they then sell for half-a-crown a-piece. Great nicety is requisite to kill them at the highest pitch of fatness; if

that is passed over, the birds are apt to fall away. The method of killing them is by cutting off the head with a pair of scissors; the quantity of blood that issues is very great, considering the size of the bird. Like the woodcock, they are dressed with their intestines, and when killed at the critical time, epicures declare them to be the most delicious of all morsels; but I consider the ortolan superior in taste to the ruff. It is a vulgar error that ruffs must be fed in the dark lest the admission of light should set them fighting. The fact is, every bird takes its stand in the room, as it would in the open fen; if another invades its circle, an attack is made, a battle ensues, and a whole room may be set into fierce contest by compelling them to move their stations; but after the place is quitted, they have been seen to resume their circles and grow pacific. The compiler kept many of the ruffs in mews, and the only disposition they ever showed to be quarrelsome was at the first, when the pan which contained their food was not large enough to admit the whole party to feed without being too close and touching each other. After the food was divided into three pans it very rarely happened that the smallest animosity was seen, although the birds were narrowly watched, in order to ascertain the truth of a peculiarity ascribed to the ruff, that a general battle would ensue if each bird had not its own pan to feed out of.

Ruffs and reeves are very frequently shot in the fens. Old Merry, who has been before noticed, well knew how to place those whom he conducted in fen shooting near some spot to which they resorted. The birds flew backwards and forwards to this spot in small parcels (termed by the fen men *wings*) of seldom more

than eight or ten; they flew very low and close together, and some of those that were shot were extremely fat.

The lapwing or peewit is so common that a detailed description is unnecessary. It is about the size of a pigeon, and weighs eight ounces; the plumage is beautiful, especially the crest. The male and female are alike, but the last rather smaller. It is a constant inhabitant of this country, and seen on most of the heaths and marshy grounds; but as it subsists chiefly on worms, it is forced to change its place in search of food, and is frequently seen in great numbers by the sea shores, where it finds an abundant supply. It is everywhere well known by its loud and incessant cries whilst on the wing, and whence, in most languages, a name has been given to it as imitative of the sound. It runs along the ground very nimbly, and bounds from spot to spot with great agility; it frolics in the air in all directions, assuming a variety of attitudes, and remaining long upon the wing. The female lays her eggs on the ground, scraping together a little dried grass for a nest. They are four in number, of a dirty olive, spotted with black. The lapwing's eggs are held in great esteem, and sell from four to five shillings a dozen; but the poulterers sell occasionally eggs of rooks for those of the plover. The hen sits about three weeks; the young lapwings run very young after being hatched, and are first covered with a blackish down, interspersed with long white hairs, which they gradually lose, and about the latter end of July acquire their handsome plumage.

The old birds show remarkable solicitude for their offspring; on the approach of any one to the place of their deposit, they fly round his head with cries of the

greatest inquietude, and become more clamorous when farthest from the nest; and they will even flutter along the ground as if lame, in order to draw off the attention of the fowler. In August the young and old associate in large flocks, which hover in the air, and betake themselves either to downs or sheep walks, and after rain disperse among the ploughed fields. In October the lapwings are very fat, and are then considered good for the table, although I never remember seeing them dressed. In Lorraine there is an old proverb: "Qui n'a pas mangé de vanneau, ne sait pas ce que gibier vaut."—(He that has not eaten lapwing knows not what game is worth.)

In October and November they are taken in the fens in nets in the same manner as the ruffs are, but are not preserved for further fattening, but killed as soon as caught.

The lapwing is frequently kept in gardens, where it is useful in feeding on the worms and slugs. When this bird sees a worm cast, he turns it aside, and after walking two or three times around it, by way of giving motion to the ground, attentively awaits the issue; the worm soon makes its appearance, which the lapwing seizes and carefully draws out. The following anecdote shows the domestic nature of this bird, as well as its singular conciliation of animals generally supposed to be hostile to the feathered race:—

Two lapwings given to the Rev. Mr. Carlyle were turned into a yard, where one soon died; the other fed on worms till winter deprived it of its usual supply. Necessity compelled it to approach the house, by which it became familiarised with the family. It was observed by one of the servants that the lapwing always made

his cry of peewit at the back kitchen door to be let in. As the winter advanced he came into the kitchen, but with much caution, as there were a dog and a cat generally in that part of the house, whose friendship the lapwing, by degrees, so conciliated, that when dark he constantly resorted to the fireside, sitting close to his associates and partaking the warmth; when spring appeared he left the house, and betook himself to the garden. He frequently washed in the bowl set with the dog's water, and was highly indignant if either of his companions presumed to interrupt him. In the winter crumbs of bread were his principal food, which he preferred to anything else. He died in the winter asylum he had chosen, being choked with some hard substance he had picked up.

A further instance of friendship between instinctive enemies occurred in 1803, where a starling in the possession of Mr. Backer of North Gate Street, Chester, lived in perfect intimacy with a cat. Such was the mutual friendliness of these animals that one platter served for both, and the back of puss was frequently the perch of his feathered companion.

There is generally a received opinion that cats are more attached to the house than to the persons who reside in it. In one instance I can refute this opinion.

Many years ago I had a fine large tom-cat, who was so fond of me that when I took a walk into the country he followed me like a dog, and hunted in the hedgerows after small birds and mice, and if when thus engaged I got some distance from him, he would set off at full speed to overtake me. I had taught him to jump over a stick and sit up. Poor Tommy, I feel certain, came to an untimely fate from his great partiality to

feed on ducklings. At this time I had apartments in a small farmhouse about half a mile from High Wycombe, being then a student at the senior department of the Military College. My landlady having complained that she had lost several of her ducklings, we decided that a stoat or weasel must have carried them off. But the culprit was soon discovered, for my cat was seen in the act of crossing the garden with one in his mouth. Poor puss soon disappeared, and I believe met with a watery grave in a small stream near the house. As a sportsman I was not very partial to the feline race, but this cat had somehow insinuated himself into my good graces.

The Lieutenant-Governor of the Military College was at this time the late General Le Marchant. Through his instrumentality the senior and junior departments of the Military College had been established at High Wycombe and Marlow. He also introduced the sword exercise into the cavalry regiments. He was an excellent cavalry officer, and was killed at the battle of Salamanca, gallantly leading on a brigade of heavy cavalry against a column of French infantry. During the period that I remained at the college, until my examination before a board of officers, I received much kindness from the lieutenant-governor, and it gives me sincere satisfaction to offer this tribute to his memory.

The wheatear is also a bird which subsists chiefly upon the same food as the dottrell, and is equally delicious. This species is met with in most parts of Europe, and Latham says he has seen specimens sent to England from the East Indies.

The wheatear visits England annually in the middle

of March, and leaves us in September; and about that time they are seen in great numbers on the coast, where probably they remain a short time before they take their departure. The females arrive about a fortnight before the males, and keep coming till the third week in May. They resort to new-tilled grounds, and follow the plough in search of insects, which are their principal food; though in rainy summers they feed much on small earthworms, and are said to be fattest in such seasons.

In some parts of England they are very plentiful and much esteemed. About Eastbourne, in Sussex, they are taken in snares made of horsehair, placed by the shepherds beneath hollows of a long turf cut out for the purpose, and being very timid birds, the appearance of a hawk, or even the motion of a cloud that intercepts the sunbeams, will drive them for shelter into these cavities, where they are entangled in the hair nooses. Gentlemen ride or walk upon the downs, who frequently examine these traps, and used formerly to commute with the shepherds by depositing a penny in the trap, whence a wheatear was taken.

The numbers annually ensnared in that district alone amounted to 1840 dozens, and the birds formerly sold for sixpence per dozen. Mr. Pennant says that the reason why they are in such plenty about Eastbourne is because a certain fly abounds in the adjacent hills, which feeds on the wild thyme, and of which they are particularly fond. Quantities are eaten by the neighbouring inhabitants; vast numbers are sent to the London poulterers; many are potted; in short, this small delicious bird may be considered the ortolan of England.

The size of this bird is nearly that of the common sparrow; the length five inches and a half; the bill

black, and more than half an inch long; the top of the head, hind part of the neck, and back are of a bluish grey; from the base of the bill a black streak extends over the eyes, cheeks, and ears, where it widens into a large patch; and above this there is a line of white. The quills are black, with tawny edges; rump, upper tail coverts, and base half of the tail white, and the rest black. The under parts of the body yellowish-white, changing to pure white at the vent; the breast tinged with red; legs and feet black. In the female the white above the eye is somewhat obscure, and all the black parts of the plumage incline more into brown, nor are the tail feathers marked so deeply with white.

Wheatears frequent heaths, and except in particular spots, as before mentioned, are only seen in a few scattered pairs. The nest, which is placed in new ploughed lands, under stones, sometimes in rabbit burrows, is constructed with much care, and is composed of dry grass and moss, mixed with wood, and lined with feathers; it is defended by a sort of covert fixed to the stone or clod, and under which it is formed, and is always made on the ground. The eggs, from five to eight in number, are of a light blue, with a circle at the large end of a deeper blue. The young are hatched the end of May or early in June. Mr. Stillingfleet in his tract, speaking of this bird, says, "that if the wheatear does not quit England, it certainly shifts places about harvest; they are not to be found where before there was great plenty of them." The most intelligent shepherds, some of whom make many pounds in a season by catching them in traps, told Mr. White that some few of these birds appear on the downs in March, and then withdraw to breed. At the time of wheat

harvest they begin to be taken in great numbers, and are sent for sale to Brighton and Tunbridge. About Michaelmas they retire, and are seen no more till the following March. Though the wheatears, when in season, are in great plenty on the South Downs, near Lewes, yet at Eastbourne, which is the eastern extremity of these Downs, they are much more abundant. One thing, continues Mr. White, is very remarkable—that though so many hundred dozens are taken, yet they are never seen to flock, and it is rare to see more than three or four at a time; so that there must be a perpetual flight and constant progressive succession, and possibly for a general migration they draw towards the coast of Sussex in autumn. A few stragglers are seen in many counties at all times of the year, especially about warrens and stone quarries.

CHAP. XXI.

THE KNOT. — THE GODWIT. — THE GOLDEN PLOVER. — THE DOTTRELL. — THE CURLEW.

" The Knot, that was Canute's bird of old,
Of that great king of Danes his name that still doth hold,
His appetite to please was farre and neere sought,
For him, as some have said, from Denmark hither brought."

DRAYTON.

THE knot, which frequents the fens, and is taken in the same way as the ruffs, may be here described. The knot is said to have been a favourite dish with Canute, King of England; and Camden observes that its name is derived from the monarch's knute or knout, which, in process of time, has been changed to knot.

These birds are caught in Lincolnshire and other fenny counties by nets, into which they are decoyed by *stale* birds, carved and painted so as to represent themselves, and placed within the range of the nets. Their numbers are so considerable that Mr. Pennant states fourteen dozen have been taken at once. They are fattened in the same way as the ruffs, and some persons prefer them for the table.

The season for taking them is from August to November, after which they disappear with the first frost. The weight of the knot is four ounces and a half; length

from nine to ten inches; breadth from sixteen to twenty inches; bill one inch and a quarter, black at the tip, and dusky ash, fading into orange towards the base. Tongue extends to the very end of the bill, and is sharp and horny at the point; irides hazel; from the bill to the eye a dusky line, over the eye a white one; the top of the head, neck, back, and wings ash colour; lower order of coverts tipped with white, and edged a little way with the same, making a bar across the wing when extended; greater quills darker with white shafts; lower part of the back and tail coverts dark ash colour, mixed with white, forming spots like crescents; tail ash colour; the under part from the throat to the vent, white, with small dusky spots on the throat and breast; the sides under the wings, the belly, thighs, and vent crossed with dusky lines; ridge of the wings white, the thighs feathered very nearly to the knee; the legs are short, in some are bluish ash colour, in others yellow; the toes are divided without any membrane. These birds, like others of the same genus, vary considerably from each other in their appearance at different seasons of the year, as well as from age and sex. Knots have been observed about Lake Baikal, and Mr. Pennant mentions a specimen which came from New York.

The godwit is taken in the same manner and at the same time as the ruffs and knots, and when ready for market each sells for five shillings and upwards. In the spring and summer it resides in fens and marshes, where it rears its young, and lives upon small worms and insects. During these seasons it only removes from one marsh to another, but when the winter sets in with severity (for the godwit continues with us the whole

year,) it seeks the salt marshes and the sandy shores by the sea-side, which for a great space are uncovered at the ebbing of the tide, where it walks like the curlew, and feeds upon the insects which there abound.

This bird is rather bigger than the woodcock, being in length from sixteen to eighteen inches, and between the tips of the extended wings twenty-eight inches broad. The weight is twelve ounces, the bill is four inches long, bending a little upwards, black at the point, gradually softening into a pale purple toward the base; the under mandible the shortest; the tongue sharp, the nostrils oblong, and the ears large. A whitish streak passes from the bill to the eye; the head, neck, and upper parts of a dingy reddish brown, each feather marked down the middle with a dark spot. The fore part of the breast is streaked with black; in the female the throat and neck are grey or ash-coloured; the belly, vent, and tail are white, the latter regularly barred with black; the six prime quill feathers are black, edged on the interior sides with reddish brown. In some birds the rump is white and the chin nearly so; the legs are not very long, naked to the middle of the second joint, and are generally dark coloured, inclining to a greenish blue. The godwit is met with in various parts of the continent of Europe and Asia, as well as in America: at Hudson's Bay the red godwit, in particular, is so plentiful that Mr. Atkinson, long resident at York Fort, killed seventy-two at a shot.

The Golden Plover.

"If foot of strangers rustle through
The heather on the moor's dark breast,
Then cunning art's perfection view—
The Plover leaves her lowly nest,
And by deserting tries to save
The nurslings to which life she gave."—J. P.

"Hence around the head
Of wand'ring swain the white wing'd wheels
Her sounding flight, and then directly on,
In long excursion skims the level lawn
To tempt him from her nest."—Thomson's *Spring*.

The golden plover is about the size of the turtle dove, its weight nine ounces, length eleven inches, breadth twenty-four inches with wings extended. The bill is short and black; the feathers on the head, back, and wing coverts are dusky, beautifully spotted on each side with light yellow green, round the eyes and chin almost white; sides of the head, the neck and sides of the body, the same as the upper parts, but much paler; the breast brown, marked with greenish oblong strokes; the middle feathers of the tail barred with black and yellowish green; the greater quills are dusky, legs black, and it wants the back toe, by which it is distinguished from other birds of this species. There is some change seen in the colour of the plumage of the belly early in

March, the appearance of black in the breast is seen increasing gradually until this part becomes quite black, but after the time of incubation this tint disappears, and the belly becomes white. There is little difference between the male and female, and in the young birds the spots are not of a full yellow, but rather inclined to a grey colour. This elegant bird remains in the kingdom the entire year, and breeds on many of our high and unfrequented mountains.

Many of the golden plovers are found in the Isle of Rum and others of the lofty Hebrides; it is also found in the Grampian Hills, and all the heathy hills of the islands and Highlands of Scotland. Vast numbers of them are found in the Orkneys, from which they do not altogether migrate; they lay four eggs, rather more pointed in shape than that of the peewit or lapwing, two inches in length, and of a pale cinereous olive, speckled with blackish spots. The birds fly in small flocks, and the whistling from which they derive their name may be heard from a considerable distance when flying, and by a skilful imitation of their note they may be enticed within shot.

In winter they may be found in various parts of England; a great number are shot and snared in Devonshire and Somersetshire, as they much frequent the meadows, moist grounds, and swampy parts of these counties. The Bath market is well supplied in this season with these excellent birds for the table, and are sold at about 2*s*. 6*d*. the brace; and in flavour and delicacy of taste I think they may almost compete with the woodcock, and they are dressed, like these birds, with their trail. Sometimes I have found little difficulty in

getting within shot of them. When these birds are in large flocks they are generally wild, and must be approached with great caution. Their flights are usually short, and I have had good sport in shooting them in the winter in the province of Valencia in Spain, where I have found them in good condition, and much relished by our small military mess. Eleven golden plovers were once killed at one shot by a gamekeeper in Somersetshire.

Latham mentions that this bird is procured in all northern countries of Europe. They are numerous in America, from Hudson's Bay to Carolina, migrating from one part to the other according to the change of the seasons, and are met as far south as Aleppo. The stalking horse was formerly made use of to get near the flocks of the golden plover, and in this way a considerable number were shot.

"During the late frost and snow, says the *Preston Guardian*, a man of the name of Crofts killed no less than 118 grey plovers at one shot, on the banks of the river Myre, near the Shard, Hambleton. The same man also killed sixteen wild ducks on the same day at one shot. The gun he used is a sort of large swivel, fixed in a boat; the ordinary loading is a quarter of a pound of powder and one pound of shot."

The Dottrell.

" The Dottrell, which we think a dainty dish,
Whose taking makes such sport as man no more can wish,
For as you creepe, or coure, or lye, or stampe, or goe,
So marking you with care the apeish bird doth doe;
And acting everything, doth never mark the net,
Till he be in the snare which man for him have set."—Drayton.

The dottrell is unknown in some parts of England, but in the counties of Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, and Derbyshire they are tolerably numerous. These birds are migratory: on Lincoln Heath and on the moors of Derbyshire they make their appearance in small flights about the month of April, remaining there all May and the greater part of June, during which time they are in good condition, and much esteemed for their excellent flavour. In Cambridgeshire they appear much about the same time, and remain the same period as in the other counties. In the months of April and September they are taken on the downs of Wiltshire and Berkshire. They are also found in the beginning of the former month on the seacoast at Meales in Lancashire, and continue there about three weeks, attending the barley fallows. From thence they remove northward, and remain there a short time, and are plentiful about Holderness and upon the Yorkshire wolds. It is not quite certain where they breed; it is supposed to be on

the mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland, as they appear there in May, and are not seen after the breeding season. Ten or twelve were once shot on the top of Skiddaw in June, and from Keswick, in Cambridgeshire, Dr. Keysham once received some dottrell eggs. They are also said to breed on several hills in the Highlands. Linnæus says they are frequent in Dalecarlia and the Lapland Alps, and visit Sweden in May. They are numerous in the north of Europe, where we may suppose them to breed. In the northern parts of Russia and Siberia they are known to do so, appearing northward only in their migrations. Their winter residence is unknown.

The dottrell is considered a very foolish bird, and was believed to imitate the action of the fowler by stretching out a wing when the other extended his arm, continuing his imitation regardless of the net that was to ensnare him. To follow this sport in catching them Willoughby states, "six or seven persons go together; when they have found the birds in an advantageous place, and each of them holding a stone in either hand, they get behind the birds, and striking the stones often one against the other, rouse them from their natural sluggishness, and by degrees drive them into the net." At the present time sportsmen watch the arrival of the dottrell, and shoot them, the former mode of driving them into the net having been long out of practice. The female weighs about four ounces; the length of the female is ten inches, breadth nineteen and a-half; the bill black, slender, depressed in the middle, and not an inch long; the forehead brown and grey, mottled with white; top and back of the head dull black, former

spotted with white; eyes dark, large, and full; over the eyes is a white band, which bends downwards, and passes to the hind head; the sides of the head and throat white, surrounded by a broad band of light olive colour, bordered on the under side with white; fore part of the neck of a cinereous olive, mixed with a little white next the throat; the middle of the feathers of the back and coverts of the wings and tail olive, but the edges of a dull deep yellow; the greater quills are brown; the outer edge of the shaft of the first feathers, the lower part of the next, bounded with a line of black, beneath it another of white; the breast and sides of a pale dull orange; middle of the belly black; lower parts of the belly and thighs rufous white; tail olive brown, near the end a bar of dusky white, the tip white: the legs are dark olive, and it wants the back toe, resembling, in this, the green plover.

The colours of the female in general are duller, the white over the eye narrower, and the crown of the head mottled with brown and white. The black on the belly is mixed with white, and the white line on the breast is narrower.

The dottrell feeds on worms and small land snails, but when they leave the marshes and betake themselves to the hilly parts of the country, it is for the sake of beetles, which form their favourite food. Their flesh is very delicate.

The Curlew

" Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood,
Ye grouse that crap the heather bed,
Ye curlews calling through a clud,
Ye whistling plover:
And mourn, ye whirring patrick brood,
He's gane for ever."—Burns.

An ancient proverb applies to this bird—

" A curlew, be she white or be she black,
She carries twelve-pence on her back."

The Curlew is found in many parts of England, and may be met with at all seasons. In the winter they frequent the seacoast and marshes in considerable numbers, where they live upon worms, marine insects, and different fishy substances which they find upon the beach, left by the retiring tide. They are generally found in the summer upon the heathy mountainous morasses, and in open weather they frequent the turnip and pasture fields, where they feed upon worms, slugs, flies, and other insects, which their long bills enable them, like the woodcock, to procure from the soft earth, and here they breed.

The female (which is bigger, but whose plumage is nearly like the male's) makes her nest upon the ground in a dry tuft of rushes or grass, of withered materials, and about the month of April lays four eggs of a pale olive colour, marked with brownish spots. These birds vary considerably in size, as well as in different shades

of plumage, some not weighing more than twenty-two ounces, and others thirty-seven ounces. In some the white parts of the plumage are clearer than in others, which are uniformly grey and tinged with pale brown. They utter a very shrill cry, that may be heard at a considerable distance. The common length of the curlew is two feet, and from tip to tip from thirty-six inches to forty. The bill is about seven inches long, of a regular curve, and tender substance at the point; the tongue sharp and very short; the upper mandible is black, gradually softening into brown towards the base, which in the under mandible is flesh coloured. The feathers of the head, neck, upper part of the back, and wing coverts are of a pale brown, the middle of each feather black, edged and deeply indented with pale rust colour or light grey; the breast, belly, and lower part of the neck dull white, marked with conjunct lines of black, the two former with oblong strokes; quills black, spotted on the inside with white; tail reddish-white barred with black; the legs are bare a little above the knees, of a dusky bluish colour; the toes are black, and flat on the under side.

The curlew is swift in its flight, and we may come to the conclusion that in former times it was esteemed an excellent bird for the table, and it may still retain that character, although I think we rarely find it in the poulterers' shops. When the curlew is shot at the period of the year when found inland and on the moors, and is in good condition from feeding on worms, &c., then the old adage applies to it,

"It carries twelvepence on its back;"

but at the other period of the year, when its haunts are

on the coast and its nourishment of a fishy kind, it acquires that taste, and is no longer palatable.

Curlews are found in most parts of Europe, and abound in all the plains and open marshes of Siberia and Russia, usually retiring northwards to breed, and returning to the south as autumn approaches. In Italy and Greece, and probably further south, they are met with, as flocks are seen passing over the island of Malta, steering in this direction.

This bird, which is in general so extremely shy and wary, will in the breeding season take circuitous flights within gunshot of persons walking near, making at the same time a loud and screaming whistle. The sense of smell is peculiarly acute in this bird, and you have no chance of getting near them excepting by going against the wind.

CHAP. XXII.

THE MAGPIE. — THE CARRION CROW. — THE JAY.

"So have I seen, in black and white,
A prating thing, a magpie hight,
Majestically stalk;
A stately worthless animal,
That plies the tongue and wags the tail—
All flutter, pride, and talk."—SWIFT.

I CONSIDER the magpie, taking altogether his fine shape and distinctly marked black and white colours, to be one of the handsomest of our native birds. It is amusing to observe the movement of his cunning eye, and the activity he displays in all his actions. But to speak the truth, "Mag" has some very bad qualities. He is a decided and skilful thief, and when allowed to go at liberty about the house, he takes and buries or conceals, out of mischief, articles that can be of no use to him. In a wild state he is notorious for sucking the eggs of pheasants and partridges, and when they have young, have frequently been seen to carry off small chickens and the broods of the above game. They are taught to speak most distinctly. A tame magpie was kept at Wormsley, in Oxfordshire, and part of his education was to say, "Charlotte," the name of Mrs. H——. One day the magpie, roaming about the lawn, screamed out, "Charlotte, Charlotte." Some of the servants ran out

to see what was the matter, when to their surprise they saw poor Mag fiercely attacked by two or three wild magpies which his human cry soon put to flight. He fell a victim at last to his greediness, for he was found smothered in a pail of barley-meal prepared for the pigs.

It is very difficult to get a shot at a magpie, and no easy matter to trap them, as they are so wary. I have mentioned elsewhere an ingenious way which my gamekeeper found very successful for their capture, by putting a trap under a small puddle of water, and placing a blown egg through which a thread had been passed on the surface of the water, after being fastened to the trap. Amongst all our birds, I think none makes a more comfortable habitation than the magpie. He shelters himself from the bad weather by the construction of a substantial roof over the nest, which is enclosed on all sides, excepting a small opening for his admittance. This, as I have elsewhere said, is the reason that the martin-cat is so partial to taking possession of a magpie's nest. It is well-known that the magpie affords excellent sport in hawking, and so dexterous is he in his manœuvres to escape his enemies on these occasions, that not only two hawks should be taken out, but several persons to assist, as it is the habit of the magpie to retreat to a large bush or thick hedge to afford him shelter and protection, and it is no easy matter to get him out of these asylums. The magpie is in length about eighteen inches, and weighs eight or nine ounces. This bird is so well known that he requires no further description.

The carrion crow is also very destructive to game; it resembles the raven in the form of its body and food

and in its attack on its prey is bold and ferocious. England breeds more of this species than any other country in Europe. In the 24th of Henry VIII. they were so numerous, that they were considered as a nuisance worthy of parliamentary redress; and an Act was passed for their destruction, in which rooks and choughs were included. Every hamlet was to provide crow nets for ten years, and all the inhabitants, during that space, were obliged to assemble to consult of the proper means for their destruction. It lays the same number of eggs as the raven, and of the same colour; immediately after deserting their young they go in pairs. The crow weighs about twenty ounces; its length is about eighteen inches; its breadth, two feet two inches. The sin of this bird against game is similar to that of the magpie, and from his being a considerably stronger bird he is a more formidable enemy. It may always be distinguished from the rook by a black whisker on each side of his bill.

The jay is one of the most beautiful of the British birds. The weight is between six and seven ounces, the length thirteen inches. The forehead is white streaked with black; the head covered with long feathers, which it can erect at pleasure into the form of a crest; the whole neck, back, breast, belly, and covert feathers of the wing are faint purple, dashed with grey. The greater covert feathers of the wings are most beautifully barred with a lively blue, black and white; the rest are black, the rump is white.

Jays build chiefly in woods, making their nests of sticks, fibres of roots, and tender twigs; and lay five or six eggs of the size of a pigeon's, cinereous olive, marked with pale brown. The young keep with the old ones till

the next pairing time in spring, when they choose each his mate. In general they feed on acorns, nuts, seeds, and fruits of all kinds; but sometimes destroy young chickens and eggs, and commit the same robberies respecting game, therefore they may fairly come under the class of a bird of prey. Like the magpie, they are very difficult to approach within gunshot. They are often kept in cages and will talk pretty well, but lose most of their beauty, so conspicuous in their wild state.

CHAP. XXIII.

THE RAVEN.—NEST BUILT IN OAK.—ITS HABITS.—MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE.

" The Raven herself is hoarse,
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements."—*Macbeth.*

THE raven weighs three pounds, and is about two feet two inches in length. The colour is black, finely glossed with a rich blue, the belly excepted, which is of a dusky colour. They are very docile, and may be trained to fowling like hawks, to fetch and carry like spaniels, to speak like parrots, and may even be taught to imitate in a great degree the human voice in singing. They have a great propensity to pilfer like the magpie, often hiding things of value. They frequent the neighbourhood of great towns abroad, where they are useful in devouring the carcases and filth, which would otherwise prove a nuisance. They also destroy many living animals, such as rabbits, ducks, chickens, and even lambs, which have been dropped in a weak state.

In clear weather they fly in pairs to a great height, making a deep loud noise, much stronger than the common croaking. Their scent is remarkably good, and they are very long lived. They make their nests early in spring, laying five or six eggs of a pale bluish colour, spotted with brown. With us they build in trees, but in

Greenland and Iceland in the holes of rocks, composing their nests of roots, twigs, and bones, and lining them with hair, moss, &c. Their flesh is eaten in Greenland by the natives, who use their skins as a warm underclothing. A remarkable instance of the raven in the act of incubation has been related by Mr. White. "In a grove near Selborne stood an oak, which though tall and shapely on the whole, bulged out into a large excrescence about the middle of the stem; on this tree a pair of ravens had fixed their residence for such a series of years, that the oak was distinguished by the title of 'the raven tree.' Many were the attempts of the neighbouring youths, and each was ambitious to get at the eyry; but when they arrived at the swelling, it jutted out in their way, and was so far beyond their grasp that the most daring lads were awed, and acknowledged the undertaking to be too hazardous. The ravens built on, nest upon nest in perfect security, till the fatal day came in which the wood was to be levelled. This was in the month of February, when the birds usually sit. The saw was applied to the butt, the wedges were inserted in the opening, the wood echoed to the heavy blows of the mallet, the tree nodded to its fall, but still the raven sat on. At last, when it gave way, the bird was flung from her nest, and though her parental affection deserved a better fate, was whipped down by the twigs which brought her dead to the ground."

The raven is considered a bird of ill omen, particularly by the lower classes, and I have heard that some gamekeepers would on no account shoot a raven, expecting that in the performance of this act the barrels of his gun would burst, and do serious injury to his hands, or that some misfortune would befall his family or connexions.

The raven, like the vulture, will scent at a great distance the bodies of the slain after a battle; and I have seen them in Spain greedily devour the remains of the soldiers.

The raven is frequently mentioned in Scripture: "And the ravens brought Elijah bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening" (1 Kings xvii. 6). "Who feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him" (Ps. cxi. 9). "But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it: the owl also, and the raven shall dwell in it" (Isaiah xxxiv. 11).

CHAP. XXIV.

THE OWL.—SUPERSTITION.—HIS PREY.

"The night (I sing by night, sometimes an owl,
And now and then a nightingale) is dim,
And the loud shriek of sage Minerva's fowl
Rattles around me her discordant hymn."—BYRON.

"Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower,
The moping owl does to the moon complain,
Of such as wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign."—GRAY'S *Elegy*.

THE brown owl is similar to the tawny in its marks, differing only in its colour; in the latter the head, wings, and back are of a deep brown, spotted with black, the coverts of the wings and scapulars are adorned with white spots, the exterior feathers of the four first quill feathers in both serrated; the breast is of a very pale ash colour, mixed with tawny, and marked with oblong jagged spots; the feet are feathered down to the very claws, the circle round the face is also coloured, spotted with brown.

It inhabits woods, where it resides the whole day. In the night they are very clamorous, and when they hoot, their throats are inflated to the size of a hen's egg. In the dark they approach our dwellings, and will frequently enter pigeon-houses and make great havoc

among them. They destroy numbers of small leverets, as appears by the legs frequently found in their nests, also young partridges, pheasants, and rabbits.* They kill abundance of moles, and skin them with as much dexterity as a mole-catcher. They build in hollow trees or ruined edifices, and lay four eggs of an elliptic form, and of a whitish colour. Many persons are very superstitious respecting the hooting of the brown owl at night. A near connexion of mine fancies when she hears this bird's discordant notes at night that it prognosticates some fatal event in the family; and many suppose it foretells a death if the owl should flap its wings against the windows of their house. St. John says: "I knew an instance where the owls were nearly destroyed by pole-traps, placed about the fields for the destruction of them and the hawks, that the rats and mice increased to such an extent on the disappearance of these their worst enemies, and committed such havoc among the nursery gardens and plantations, that the proprietors were obliged to have all the pole-traps taken down, and the owls having been allowed to increase again, the rats and mice quickly disappeared."

The wings of the owl are lined with small soft feathers, which makes his flight inaudible even on a still night, and thus he is enabled to approach his prey before they are aware of his nightly attack, so that rats, mice, and moles are without much difficulty made his victims. When in the pursuit of these small animals his flight is near the ground, which empowers him to

* A brown owl's nest was found, May 1858, at Whitney Court, Wilts, the residence of C. Giles, Esq., which contained, besides the old bird, three young ones, five small leverets, four young rabbits, three thrushes, and a trout weighing nearly half a pound.

pounce on his prey, encircle them with his wings, and grasp them in his sharp and powerful claws, when their death instantly follows. The enormous rate at which mice increase when their active enemies — owls, storks, weasels — are unable to get at them will be seen from the following story:—

"On a recent occasion the tenant of Hurland, in the island of Stronsa, had occasion to take down ten stacks of bere to be thrashed. On the first being demolished, it was found to contain an enormous number of mice, so much so that the parties engaged had quite a field day in slaughtering the animals, many of which succeeded in escaping. Additional dogs and men, the latter armed with sticks and other instruments of murder and torture, were then obtained to assist in despatching the squatters in the remaining nine stacks; and at the close of the work of destruction, which occupied several days, it was found that the slain amounted to no less than the incredible number of 3410, besides an immense quantity the dogs devoured and those that escaped during the assault."

In consequence of the great ravages made by the rats and mice on his tenant's stacks, the landlord gave orders to his gamekeeper to cease for a time waging war against the owls and the ground vermin.

Although owls, like rooks, destroy some game, still the benefit derived by the farmer affords a balance in their favour. Rooks certainly make attacks on the corn in harvest time, and when the wheat is sown; but watch them following the plough, how they devour the wireworm, slugs, grubs, and other mischievous insects.

CHAP. XXV.

THE EAGLE.—ROMAN AND PERSIAN STANDARDS.—GOLDEN EAGLE.—TAWNY EAGLE.—DANGER IN TAKING EAGLETS.—CAPTURE OF AN EAGLE.—THE EAGLE A GLUTTON.—ANECDOTE.

" Every one is eagle-eyed to see,
Another's faults and his deformity;
There is a lust in man no charm can tame,
Of loudly publishing his neighbour's shame:
On eagle's wings immortal scandals fly,
While virtuous actions are but born and die."—HARVEY.

" Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister,
Whose happy flight is highest into Heaven,
Well may'st thou swoop so near me. I should be
Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets; thou art gone
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above,
With a pervading vision."—BYRON. *Manfred*, sc. 2.

THE eagle in antiquity was borne by way of ensign by several nations. The first who appear to have assumed the eagle are the Persians, according to Xenophon. It was afterwards assumed by the Romans, who, after a great variety of standards, ultimately fixed on the eagle in the second year of the consulate of C. Marius. Till that time they used indifferently wolves, leopards, and eagles, according to the humour of the

commander. The Roman eagles were not painted on a cloth or flag, but were figures in relievo of silver or gold, borne on the top of pikes, the wings being displayed, very similar to those now made use of in the French army, and frequently a thunderbolt in their talons; under the eagle on the pike were piled bucklers and sometimes crowns. This has been ascertained from the medals. Constantine is said to have first introduced the eagle with two heads, to intimate that though the empire seemed divided, it was yet only one body. This is proved by an eagle with two heads, noted by Lipsius on the Antonine Column.

The golden eagle is one of the various species found in the United Kingdom, but chiefly in Scotland and Ireland. The golden eagle weighs about twelve pounds, and is about three feet long, the wings when extended measuring seven feet four inches. The senses of sight and smelling are very acute; the head and neck are clothed with narrow sharp pointed feathers of a deep brown colour, bordered with tawny; the hind part of the head is of a bright rust colour. These birds are destructive to fawns, lambs, kids, and all kinds of game, particularly in the breeding season, when they bring a vast quantity of prey to their young. Smith, in his History of Kerry, relates that a poor man in that county obtained a comfortable subsistence for his family during a summer of famine out of an eagle's nest, by robbing the eaglets of the food the old ones brought, whose attendance was protracted beyond the natural time by clipping the wings and retarding the flight of the former. In order to extirpate these pernicious birds, there was formerly a law in the Orkney Isles which entitled every person that killed

an eagle to a hen out of every house in the parish where it was killed. Eagles seem to give the preference to the carcases of dogs and cats. Those who formerly made it their business to kill these birds fired the instant they alighted, for the eagle at that time looks about before she begins her prey. Yet quick as her sense of sight may be, her hearing seems still better. If hooded crows or ravens happen to be nearer the carrion, and resort to it first, and give a single croak, the eagle instantly repairs to the spot. These eagles are remarkable for their longevity, and for sustaining a long absence from food. Mr. Keysler relates that an eagle died at Vienna after a confinement of 104 years. This length of days seems alluded to by the Psalmist: "thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." A bird in the possession of Owen Holland, Esq. furnishes us with a proof how long they can exist without food, having once through the negligence of the servants, endured hunger for twenty-one days, without any sustenance whatever.*

The tawny, or white tailed eagle of Edwards, has the whole plumage of a dusky brown; the breast marked with triangular spots of white. The tail is white tipped with black, but in young birds dusky, blotched with white. The legs are covered to the toes with soft rust-coloured

* Whilst shooting, in December 1857, a boatman was fortunate enough to shoot, on the Lower Shannon, with a charge of snipe shot, a fine golden eagle. The bird measured seven feet from tip to tip of its wings. It was blowing a gale of wind on the day it was shot, and I suppose that, after a heavy gorge, it was beaten about till it settled for shelter upon Green's Island. It came from the westward (county Kerry) direction, perhaps from Killarney. The man crept up a deep ditch within shot.

feathers. This species is frequent in Scotland, where it is called the black eagle, from the dark colour of its plumage. It is very destructive to deer, which it will seize between the horns, and by incessantly beating it about the eyes with its wings, soon makes a prey of the harassed animal. The eagles of the Isle of Rum have nearly extirpated the stags that used to abound there. They generally build in the clefts of rocks near the deer forests, and make great havoc among them, the white hares and ptarmagans. Willoughby gives the following curious account of the nest of this species:— "In 1668, in the woodlands near the river Darwent, in the peak of Derbyshire, was found an eagle's nest, made of great sticks, resting one end on the end of a rock, the other on two birch trees, upon which was a layer of rushes, and over them a layer of heath; and upon the heath rushes again, upon which lay a young one and an addled egg, and by them a lamb, a hare, and three heath poults. The nest was about two yards square, and had no hollow in it." The following account of the capture of four young of this species, when about three months old is given by Mr. Bullock.

"On the 10th of June 1812, they were seen in their eyrie, on the tremendous cliff called the west crags in the Isle of Hay (one of the Orkneys), the towering rocks of which rise to the perpendicular height of 1200 feet from the sea. About one-third down this awful abyss a slender pointed rock projected from the cliff, like the pinnacle of a Gothic building; on the extremity of this is a hollow, scarcely of sufficient size for the purpose for which these birds had fixed on it, that is, as a place of security for rearing their young; the situation was such as almost to defy the power of man to molest

their habitation; yet with the assistance of a short slender rope made of twisted hogs' bristles, did the well known adventurous climber or rockman Woolley Tomson traverse the face of this frightful precipice, and for a trifling remuneration brought up the young birds.

"After a fatiguing scramble up the sides of the mountains, we arrived at the place from whence we could see the eyrie beneath; the distance was so great that the young eagles appeared no bigger than pigeons. After placing us in a secure situation on a projecting ledge of the rock, that commanded a view of the scene of action, Tomson left us, carrying his rope in his hand, and disappeared for upwards of half an hour; when, to our great joy, we discovered him creeping on his hands and knees up the spiry fragment, on which lay the unfledged eaglets: when, knowing he was then in our sight, he knelt on the top, and looking towards us, waved his hat. At this time it was impossible to see the situation he was in without trembling for his safety; the slender point of the rock on which he knelt was at least 100 feet above the surges of the Atlantic, which with unbroken violence were foaming beneath him. Yet he deliberately took from his pocket a cord, and tying the wings of the young birds, who made some resistance with their bills and talons, he put them into a basket, and began to descend, and in a few minutes the overhanging masses of stone hid him from our view. The old birds were in sight during the transaction, and made no attempt to defend their young, but soaring about a quarter of a mile above, occasionally uttered a short shrill scream, very different from their usual barking noise. Had they attempted a rescue, the situation of the climber would have been extremely dangerous, as

the slightest deviation or false step would have precipitated him into eternity, a misfortune that a few years since befell his brother on the same spot, when in his company. After waiting in a most painful state of anxiety for nearly an hour, our climber suddenly made his appearance, and laughing, presented his prize."

"In 1857, a shepherd named Ferguson, in the employ of Mr. M'Arthur, of Ardmeanach, made a clever capture of an eagle on the property of that gentleman. Having found a 'braxy hog' late one evening, he (the shepherd) went to the hill early next morning for the purpose of fetching the carcase home, and having his attention arrested by the motion of some animal on the body of the sheep, he approached cautiously, and discovered the intruder to be an enormous eagle, so busily engaged tunnelling the body of the sheep as to be wholly unaware of his approach. Watching the motion of the bird, standing still as it withdrew to gorge what it had excavated, and only approaching when its head was sheathed in the breastbone of the sheep, he was enabled by a sudden spring to disable it so far as to effect, though not without the aid of his dog, and after suffering a great deal in the encounter himself, the capture of the bird alive.

"It measured seven feet six inches from point to point of its wings, and is one of the largest that has been seen in the part of the country where it was taken for years.

"A pair, of which it is one, have for more than fifty years been known to frequent and build in the crags above Inchkenneth, but without bringing eaglets to maturity, so far as is known, and the shepherds in the district hail with no small degree of satisfaction the

capture of a depredator, such as this was known to have been.

"With the exception of a 'game' wing, it seems to have quite got over the hard usage it was subjected to before it gave in, and consumes with infinite gusto whatever is thrown to it in the shape of fish, meat, 'fur or feathers.' "—*Glasgow Daily Mail.*

From an anecdote I heard from a friend of mine lately respecting an eagle that was kept by a gentleman at Brentwood, in Essex, it shows that this noble bird is a good guardian at night against robbers. During the winter a number of burglaries had taken place in the town of Brentwood and its neighbourhood; but the thieves never made any attempt to break into the house of this gentleman, for if the eagle heard any footsteps about the premises during the night, he instantly commenced loud screaming, which had the effect of putting the family on their guard, of which there can be little doubt the robbers were aware.

Perhaps there is no bird more voracious or a greater glutton than the eagle, not even excepting the vulture.* St. John says, in speaking of the wild part of the Highlands, "when I was in Sutherland, I twice fell in with instances of eagles being knocked down, when unable to rise from over-eating. On one occasion a curious kind of character, who acted the part of hanger-on to me in my deer-shooting excursions, brought home an eagle, which he had killed with his stick, before it could rise

* In ascending the river Magdalena, in South America, I saw the king of the vultures feasting on the entrails of a dead alligator, surrounded by several black vultures, who kept at a respectful distance from his majesty. The plumage of the royal bird was particularly beautiful. The late General Campbell and myself endeavoured to get a shot at him, but could not accomplish this, as he was exceedingly wary.

from the ground. This man was dumb, and thought (very erroneously) to be half-witted also." This gentleman mentions further, that a tame eagle, which he kept for some time, killed and devoured all the cats about the place.*

Notwithstanding the depredations committed by this noble and majestic bird, even on deer, game, lambs, &c., I confess I should feel sincere regret if this species of bird should become extinct in Scotland, as the eagle is peculiarly characteristic of the romantic and wild features of many parts of the Highlands. It is a fine sight to see one of these noble birds, perched on the height of an inaccessible rock, surveying with his brilliant and piercing eye the surrounding country, or to view him ascending gracefully into the air, and reaching such a height as to become at last almost invisible. Gamekeepers, who are employed to preserve the deer in the forests, and those who perform the same duty as regards black game and grouse on the moors, are actuated by one feeling towards the king of the birds, which is to give him no quarter; but there is this to be said in his favour, that he destroys several animals which are very destructive to game, such as the wild cat, the marten cat, the house cat that takes to the fields and woods, the pole-cat, fox, stoat, weasel, &c. That the eagle destroys small vermin, as well as game, will be seen by the following curious anecdote from

* In Mr. M'Dougall's excellent work on shooting, is a list of vermin destroyed on the Glengarry estate, Inverness-shire; I was sorry to observe that many harmless and even useful birds had been put to death under the pretext of their being destructive to game. In three years, 41 golden and white-tailed eagles, 6 jer falcons, 98 penguins, 462 kestrels, 35 horned owls, and 71 fern owls, or night-jare, were killed.

Fennell—"Some haymakers on Chapelhope meadows, at the upper end of St. Mary's Loch, in Selkirkshire, saw an eagle rapidly soaring above the steep mountains in a singular and agitated manner; they kept their eyes upon him until he was nearly out of sight; in a short time, however, they were all convinced that he had fallen with great rapidity like a shot bird. At last he fell a short distance from the party. On their approach, a stoat ran from the body, turned with the usual impudence of the tribe, stood upon its hind-legs, crossed its fore-paws over its nose, surveyed its enemies for a moment or two, and then bounded into a saugh bush. The eagle was dead, and covered with blood, which had issued from a wound in its throat."

CHAP. XXVI.

THE FOX.—HIS MANŒUVRES.—"THE BITER BIT."—ALWAYS THE SAME.—HIS GREATEST FOE.

"'Come down,' said Reynard, 'let us treat of peace;'
'A peace, with all my soul,' said Chanticleer;
But, with your favour, I will treat it here;
And, lest the truce with treason should be mixt,
'Tis my concern to have the tree betwixt.'"

DRYDEN, *Cock and the Fox.*

IN writing about this animal I am treading on tender ground, and must be cautious in treating of the habits of sly Pug to procure his livelihood. Gamekeepers have almost always a decided hatred against him, and father on him many sins of which I verily believe he is blameless. There can be no doubt that he enjoys exceedingly his supper, which may consist of a pheasant or a partridge, but it has been fully ascertained that where there is a tolerable stock of rabbits, *this* is his favourite food, and to catch them alive he makes use of all his cunning and artful wiles. I have mentioned in another part of this work,—his manœuvres to catch young rabbits near their burrows, and his pretending to be asleep on the banks of decoy ponds until the wild ducks swim sufficiently near, when he makes a spring at them, and seldom fails in providing himself with a good meal. However, with all his craft and

cunning, you sometimes find the biter is literally bit. "One morning, some years ago, a man perceived a fox on the Shetland coast, and although the tide was coming in it seemed heedless, and busily engaged with something. The man, after observing him for a little time, went to his hut for his gun, and forthwith down to the shore and shot the fox, which was as careless of his approach as that of the coming tide. On going to pick him up he was found to be held fast by the tongue between the shells of one of the large mussels, which are sometimes seven inches long, and adhere firmly to the crevices of the rocks or larger stones below the sands. Had not the fox been killed by the man it would probably have been drowned by the no less merciless tide." The female brings forth four or five cubs at a litter, about April, and which arrive at maturity in about eighteen months.* While they are helpless she

* When hunting with the late Mr. Humphrey Sturt's fox-hounds in Dorsetshire, about 50 years ago, we drove a fox to earth, late in the day (December), which Mr. Sturt determined to have dug out, being anxious to blood his hounds. Some labourers performed this operation, and about eight o'clock the fox was secured. All the field had left Mr. Sturt, excepting the late Colonel Cheney and myself. Wood, the huntsman, held the fox up in the air, and we all cheered the hounds, that had been lying asleep. The huntsman then threw the fox in the middle of them, when, to our astonishment, we heard no fighting amongst the hounds in tearing him to pieces, and on putting down a lantern to see what they were about, most of them were looking up, and sly Reynard had actually made his escape from the middle of them. Mr. Sturt wished to pursue him, but as the huntsman, Col. Cheney, and myself objected, the hounds went home, and we had ten miles to ride to our barracks. My friend Colonel Cheney commanded the Greys at the battle of Waterloo after their colonel was killed. He had two horses killed and two wounded under him He was a most gallant officer, and died about seven years ago. In a charge at the battle of Waterloo my late old and gallant friend had his horse severely wounded, which

exhibits great attachment for them, and an unusual degree of boldness in defending them from aggression. Several instances have been recorded of her carrying a whelp in her mouth while pursued by the hounds, when, in such case, the dogs are whipped off. Once, when dining in Leicestershire with the master of the Quorn hounds, I heard him relate the following story, which displays at once the sagacity and fondness of these animals for their offspring:—"A vixen fox had been killed by the hounds, and her cubs were found in a rabbit burrow. As they were very young they were left in this place, the huntsman feeling certain that the dog fox would take care to provide them with proper nourishment. He went to the young ones a day or two afterwards, and in one part of the earth were lying a couple of young rabbits untouched. On examining more closely the spot, he found the remains of some rabbits that were not more than three or four days old, soft and easy to be bitten by the young ones. The dog fox having thus ascertained that the cubs would be starved to death unless he procured them food they could masticate, went diligently in search of the stop of rabbits until he found the young rabbits as suitable

in falling got the Colonel's right leg under him, and notwithstanding all his exertions he could not release himself. At no great distance was seen a regiment of Polish Lancers, coming to support a defeated column of the French Infantry. Fortunately, after this, the Colonel's charger made a violent struggle, by which he was able to release his leg, and he set off running towards our lines. He had not proceeded any great distance when he heard a horse galloping after him, and conceiving it must be one of the Polish Lancers, he turned round to defend himself, when to his surprise he found it was his own horse. He instantly mounted him; he carried him safely to his regiment, but in the course of half an hour the poor horse fell dead from loss of blood. This was told me by my late friend.

food for his cubs." The fox, though it may be domesticated when taken very young, never becomes thoroughly reclaimed. Its natural propensities cannot be completely subdued; and Shakspeare judges rightly when he says of his character, that the foxes "so tame, so cherished, and locked up, will have a wild trick of his ancestors." When the fox is hunted by hounds, if he sees at a distance a flock of sheep he is almost sure to take shelter among them, as well as to destroy his scented track, and to effect this last they have sometimes been seen to run along the top of a thick and close hedge. Schreber, in his history of quadrupeds, says—"The smell of a fox is strong and unpleasant, but on the tail is a spot from which proceeds a violaceous scent." The character of the fox never changes: in whatever part of the globe he is found he displays the same adroitness and cunning, whether he subsists on fish, flesh, or fowl, but his greatest ravages are amongst game and domestic poultry; and woe unto the unfortunate inhabitants of the poultry yard into which he has contrived to make his entry, for he appears to take as much delight in the slaughter of all within his power as poachers would receive in a successful night's predatory expedition, and on these occasions he has been found obliged to leave many of his victims behind. Many of the fowls which he carries off he buries carefully under ground, an instance of which was the cock pheasant which I found quite fresh buried in a ploughed field, which had a small bit of the tail sticking out. Reynard possesses one good quality in Scotland,—he is of essential service in the destruction of the moor mouse, which sometimes is bred in such immense multitudes as to destroy the vegetation of the moors, to the great loss

of the proprietors. In France and Italy the foxes sometimes do great damage to the vineyards, by feeding on the grapes, and of this fruit we know that he is immoderately fond, and he gets very fat upon it. Notwithstanding the mischievous qualities of Reynard, one cannot help feeling regard for an animal which affords such excellent field sport to the fox-hunters of this country. To stand high in the opinion of this class a man requires to have strong nerves, be a good rider, and have a sharp and acute eye to overcome the obstacles which may impede his progress in an enclosed and stiff country, more especially when the scent is good and the hounds going at their full speed. Of all field sports I think there is nothing so exciting as a good run for thirty or forty minutes without a check, and killing your fox. What joy and pleasure is expressed in all the countenances of the persons who are so fortunate as to be in at the death, and who have had the good luck to be well mounted. When quartered, many years ago, at Leicester, I went out once, in March, with the Quorn hounds, kept by old Mr. Meynell, who is considered the father of fox-hunters, from his great skill and knowledge of this manly amusement. He has been heard to say that if a man had been a regular fox-hunter for half a century he would still, at the end of that time, have much to learn in hunting the sly and crafty Reynard. I suspect there are few men alive now that can say they have hunted with Mr. Meynell's hounds.

The fox has some most determined and inveterate enemies in the gamekeepers, and sometimes their masters are in this respect just as bad as the servants, and there can be no doubt that considerable numbers of them

are shot and trapped, and buried under ground. It is, however, not a very easy matter to trap a fox, for he has a decided aversion to a dead bait, and likes to kill his prey. In countries where fox-hunting cannot be pursued on account of the natural obstacles of the country, Reynard can only be considered as vermin, and there can be certainly no harm in planning his destruction. In Germany, one of the chief perquisites of the jäger, or gamekeeper, are the skins of foxes, martens, wild cats, badgers, &c., which are only killed in the winter, when the furs are in good condition; and so skilful are these jägers with their rifles, that many of these animals are killed with ball, but they prefer trapping them, and rarely make use of a gun loaded with shot, from fear of damaging the fur.

CHAP. XXVII.

THE OTTER.—HIS HABITS.—HIS TEACHABLENESS.

" On the soft sand,
See there his seal-impressed: and on that bank
Behold the glittering spoils,—half eaten fish,
Scales, fins, and bones, the leavings of his feast."

SOMERVILLE.

THE charge of destroying game can certainly not be brought against the otter; but as he affords much sport he has a fair claim to be introduced into this work.

The head of the otter is compressed, the ears are short, and the eyes are so situated that they can see objects above them, even when the head is in a horizontal position. The feet are palmated or webbed, the toes are covered with hair, and the surface of the tail is flattened. Its favourite haunts are the sides of rivers and lakes, especially such as have gravelly bottoms and high banks. Pennant says "it forms a habitation by burrowing under ground, on the banks of some river or lake, and always makes its hole under water, works upwards to the surface of the earth, and then makes a minute orifice for the admission of air. Its lurking place may be detected by the quantity of its excrement, and the remains of its prey lying on the shore or banks. The otter can run tolerably fast, and it dives or swims with

greater expertness and celerity than even the finny tribes themselves. It lives chiefly on fish, not only devouring great numbers, but destroying more than it consumes, so that it has been known to kill every fish in a pond in the course of one night. It either catches its prey by rising under it or pursuing it into some little creek, and seizing it there." Mr. Stoddart observes that "the otter, although naturally shy, and no lover of daylight, will at times, when in the pursuit, show a bold front, and has been known to contest its prey even with man himself." A gentleman, when angling for pike on the loch of Lowes, brought to land a fine fish of ten or twelve pounds weight, was surprised to observe a large otter swim ferociously towards him; nor did it cease its attack until it had succeeded in carrying away pike, hook, and all. Another person, when angling in St. Mary's Loch at night, has frequently been followed to a short distance by an otter, ready to pounce upon such fish as he might happen to hook. The old ones are exceedingly strong and fierce, and never let go when once they have got hold of their enemy. If fish happen to become scarce and inaccessible, the otter preys on animal food, such as rats and insects; and Lovel states, "it feeds on the tops of plants, fruits, and the bark of trees." With respect to the breeding season of the otter, Professor Bell says that "in Britain they produce from three to five young, in March or April;" but Goldsmith, who appears to have carefully observed the animal's habits, asserts that with us the young are never found until the latter end of summer, in which season he has frequently discovered them when he was a boy.

The female litters on the hollow bank, upon a bed

of rushes, flags, or other aquatic plants. When tamed the otter will follow its owner like a dog, and will catch fish for him; but then he must be taken young, and it is quite certain that the old ones can never be thoroughly tamed, and if kept for the purpose of fishing, are always apt to take the first opportunity of escaping. As regards their food when taken young, they are fed with small fish and water; in proportion as they increase in strength they have milk mixed with their food, the quantity of fish reduced, and that of vegetables increased, until at length their diet may be entirely bread, which perfectly agrees with them. To train them up to fishing requires great assiduity and patience, but their activity and expertness when taught amply repays this trouble. The usual plan is first to teach them to fetch and carry, employing for the purpose a piece of leather, shaped like a fish, and stuffed with wool. When they have seized it, they are made to drop it at the word of command, to run after it again when thrown forward, and to return with it to their master. They are next exercised with dead fish, which are thrown into the water for them to fetch from thence. Lastly, living fish are thrown into the water, until the otter is perfectly disciplined in the art of catching fish.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THE STOAT OR ERMINE.—PERSEVERANCE OF STOAT AFTER ITS PREY.—DESTRUCTION OF GAME BY STOATS.—THE WEASEL: ITS FEROCITY.—FOND OF EGGS AND YOUNG BIRDS.

THE stoat or ermine, though common in Britain, is very numerous in the wilds of Russia, Siberia, and Lapland, and other cold countries in Europe-Asia. It is nearly ten inches from the nose to the rump, and the tail is four inches and three quarters long; the stoat is about one-third larger than the weasel. The other points of distinction are, that the head of the stoat is broader in proportion to its length, and the tail larger and more bushy, and tipped with black; the upper part of the head, neck, and tail are light reddish brown, the under parts white, tinged with yellow; the ends of the ears and toes are yellowish white. It is known in this country as the stoat, but when it has been long exposed to severe cold, either from its choosing to inhabit mountainous localities, the entire fur becomes white, with a slight tinge of yellow. The change of colour which takes place during the colder months of the year is now ascertained, with tolerable accuracy, to be caused by an actual whitening of the fur, and not by the gradual substitution of white for dark hairs, as was for some time

supposed to be the case. The hairs are not entirely white, even in their most completely blanched state, but partake of a very delicate cream yellow. In these comparatively temperate latitudes the stoat is never sufficiently blanched to render its fur of any commercial value, and the hair appears to be longer, thicker, and whiter in proportion to the degree of latitude in which the animal has been taken. The traps which are used for the purpose of destroying the stoat are formed so as to kill the animal by a sudden blow, without wounding the skin; and many of the beautiful little creatures are taken in the ordinary snares. Providence has given to the stoat this white colour of its fur as a protection from its enemies when the ground is covered with snow. Putting aside the mode in which the fur changes its colour, the principal object of it appears to be to defend the wearer against the intense cold which reigns in those northern regions. In this country, where the lowest temperature is considerably above that of the ordinary winter degrees, the stoat is very uncertain in its change of fur. In the autumn, when the stoat is beginning to assume its wintry dress, and in the spring when it is beginning to lose the snowy mantle of the wintry months, the fur is generally found to be marked with irregular patches of dark and white spots. Mr. Thompson, in his "Natural History of Ireland," says that he saw a stoat which was captured on the 27th of January 1846, which was wholly white, with the exception of a brown spot on each side of its face, yet the winter had been remarkably mild. Two white stoats were killed in Ayrshire, 1839.

The stoat is a most determined hunter, pursuing its game with such pertinacious skill that it very seldom

permits its intended prey to escape. Although tolerably swift of foot, it is entirely unable to cope with the great speed of the hare, an animal which frequently falls a victim to the stoat; yet it is enabled by its great delicacy of scent and the singular contrivance of its frame, to run down any hare on whose track it may have set itself. When pursued by a stoat the hare* does not seem to put forward its strength as it does when it is followed by dogs, but as soon as it discovers the nature of its pursuer it seems to lose all energy and hops lazily along as if its faculties were benumbed by some powerful agency. This great lassitude is of essential service to the stoat in enabling it to secure an animal which might, in a very few minutes, place itself beyond the reach of danger by running in a straight line. To account for this is, I conceive, extremely difficult, for it seems that when the hare once ascertains the persevering enemy that pursues him, he is deprived of that speed and exertion which he displays when hunted by harriers or coursed by greyhounds; it is a sort of fascination or terror, with which birds are sometimes seized when a cat steadfastly fixes his eyes on his intended victim, and he remains motionless on the bough until captured and devoured. The stoat is an excellent swimmer, which is proved by what has been related by Mr. Thompson. "A respectable farmer, when crossing in his boat an arm of the sea, about one mile in breadth which separates a portion of Islandmagee (a peninsula near Larne, county Antrim) from the mainland, observed a ripple proceeding from some animal in the water, and upon rowing up found it was a 'weasel,'

* This I have stated when writing about hares.

(stoats are called weasels in Ireland) which he had no doubt was swimming for Islandmagee, as he had seen it going in a direct line from the shore, and it had reached the distance by a quarter of a mile when taken. The poor animal was cruelly killed, although its gallant swimming might have pleaded in favour of its life.' In respect of food the stoat is not very dainty, killing and eating any description of wild quadrupeds that he is able to overpower, sucking the eggs of pheasants and partridges, and feasting on the young birds, and even the old ones when he is able to surprise them on the ground.* The stoat in pursuit of its prey haunts woods, hedges, and meadows whose sides are covered with small bushes, and sometimes, though not so often as the weasel, it inhabits barns and outhouses; when this is the case it frequently makes sad havoc amongst the poultry, killing in one night a great number of them by a bite in the neck and sucking some of their blood. A trap that strikes low with round teeth, and carefully covered over with fine sifted earth, set where the stoat enters the poultry yard, will be sure to catch him. White says, "In September 1834, he witnessed a furious contest between a stoat and a water rat; the rat defended himself with great courage and ferocity, but was at length overpowered by the stoat, which seized him just under the ear and bore him off to his retreat."

About the middle of July 1827, a gentleman at Cathcart wounded a stoat. The animal having escaped into a hole in an old stone wall, the gentleman explored his retreat, when the first victims he met with were a

* I have mentioned, when writing on game, that a keeper of mine told me: "I thinks as how, sir, that a stoat kills as much game in a season as a qualified gentleman."

couple of leverets, unmutilated; further on two young partridges, also entire, and a pheasant's egg, unbroken; beyond these were found the heads of two other leverets, in a state of putrefaction; and at the extremity of the hole the little marauder was lying dead. It might have been thought that this extraordinary accumulation was the result of a provident disposition in the animal; but the putrid state of the detached heads of the two leverets seems to confirm the common statement of naturalists, that the weasel tribe seldom devour their prey till it begins to putrefy. The female stoat brings forth about five young ones in April or May. Mr. Blythe says that, in confinement, the stoat has been known to breed with the ferret and domesticated polecat.

There is hardly any animal which, for its size, is so much to be dreaded by the creatures on which it preys as the common weasel. Although its diminutive proportions render a single weasel an insignificant opponent to man or dog, yet it can wage a sharp battle even with such powerful foes, and refuses to yield except at the last necessity. The proportions of the weasel are extremely small, the male being rather larger than the opposite sex. In total length a full grown male does not much exceed ten inches, of which the tail occupies more than a fifth, while the female is rather more than an inch shorter than her mate. The colour of the fur is a bright reddish brown on the upper parts of the body, and the under portions are of a pure white, the line of demarcation being tolerably well defined; this contrast of red and white renders it an extremely pretty animal. The tail is of a uniform tint with the body, and is not

furnished with the tuft of jetty hairs that forms so conspicuous a decoration of the stoat. The audacity of this little creature is really remarkable, it seems to hold every being except itself in the most sovereign contempt, and, to all appearance, is as ready to match itself against a man as against a mouse. Mr. Wood says, "I remember being entirely baffled by the impertinence of one of these animals, although I was provided with a gun. While I was walking along a path that skirted a corn field, a stir took place among some dried leaves by the hedge side, and out ran something small and red along the bottom of the hedge. I instantly fired, but without success, at the moving object, which turned out to be a weasel. The little creature, instead of running away, or appearing alarmed at the report of the gun, which tore up the ground around it, coolly ran into the middle of the path, and sitting up on its hind legs, with its paws crossed over its nose, leisurely contemplated me for a moment or two, and then quietly retired into the hedge."

Many farmers are in the habit of destroying the weasel, which they look upon as vermin, but it is now generally thought that although the weasel must plead guilty to the crime of destroying poultry now and then, it may yet plead its great services in the destruction of rats and mice. There is no hole through which either of these animals can pass which will not quite as readily suffer the passage of the weasel; and as the weasel is most determined and pertinacious in pursuit, it seldom happens that rats or mice escape when their little foe has set itself fairly on their track. It has also got as acute a scent as the stoat, which makes it a most formidable enemy, and it will even

cross water in pursuit of its prey. Like the stoat, it fixes its teeth in its devoted victim on the back of the neck, where it retains its deadly hold in spite of all the struggles of the wounded animal.

Gamekeepers have good reason to wage an active war against the weasel, as it is very fond of eggs and young birds of all kinds. So determined a poacher is the weasel that it has been known to capture full grown birds. A weasel has been seen to leap from the ground into the midst of a covey of partridges, just as they were rising on the wing, and to bring one of them to the earth. This event took place at Mansfield in the month of October. A gentleman who had discovered a furtive nest made by one of his hens in a hedge-row, was witness to a curious scene. Just as a hen had laid an egg, she issued from her nest, cackling triumphantly; a weasel, which had been observed at a great distance stretching its neck as if watching for its prey, darted towards the spot, but just before it reached the nest it was anticipated by a crow, which seized the egg and bore it off in triumph. "In January 1818, a man in the parish of Glencairn, Dumfriesshire, was suddenly attacked by six weasels, which rushed upon him from an old dyke in a field; alarmed by such a furious onset he took to his heels, but he soon found he was closely pursued, and although he endeavoured to protect himself by several backhanded strokes with a horsewhip, yet so eager was their pursuit that they were about to seize him by the throat, when he hastily snatched up the fallen branch of a tree, when he killed three of them, and put the other three to flight." A few years ago, a boy was hoeing a quick-set hedge, when several weasels rushed upon him, and

attacked his legs with determined ferocity; excessively terrified, he roared out lustily, and his father, who was near at hand, ran to his help and beat off the assailants with a hoe; scarcely had he turned his back, when they renewed the attack, and were obliged to be repelled in a similar manner; a third was even menaced before they were finally put to the rout.

CHAP. XXIX.

THE BADGER.—THE POLECAT.—THE MARTEN.

" How oft we seek a solitude,
Where care (we hope) will ne'er intrude.
Alas! how oft our hopes are vain;
Care drags us to the world again.
Just so the badger: shouts of men,
The bark of dogs, ring round his den;
In vain to his calm retreat he goes,
Forth he is dragg'd by slaught'ring foes."—J. PITMAN.

THE badger has suffered more, perhaps, from vulgar prejudices than any other animal. He has been accused of destroying lambs and rabbits: the first unquestionably without foundation, and it is uncertain whether the last charge be better supported, for many naturalists maintain that his sole food consists of roots, fruits, grass, insects, and frogs. But my gamekeeper assured me that he sucked the eggs of pheasants and partridges, having found the impression of his feet near where the shells were lying. This I think likely enough.

The badger is found in many parts of England, Scotland, and other European countries. Its favourite haunts are the deepest recesses of woods, and the thick coppices covering the sides of hills. The badger is two

feet and a quarter in length from the end of the snout to the rump. The weight varies in different specimens, and according to the season, some weighing only fifteen pounds and others exceeding thirty. The body is long and robust, the skin loose and tough. The hair is coarse and wiry; that on the back is long, and of a fine reddish-grey, varying in tint in different parts; that of the belly is particularly long. The head is white, but with a black band on either side, and dividing the cheek from the forehead, and including the eyes and ears in its own space. The muzzle is long, and terminates in a movable snout. The eyes are small, as also are the ears, which are semicircular, and nearly concealed in long hair. The tongue is smooth. The feet are hairy, each with five toes, armed with strong curved claws fitted for digging; the tail very short and light grey. The walk of the badger is plantigrade, like that of the bear. The two sexes are seldom seen together. In their secluded haunts they dig two or three deep subterranean apartments, the only entrance of which is by a slanting and even winding passage. In these burrows they sleep the greater part of the day, and emerge for a short period in the evenings or night to go in search of prey. In the summer time the female forms a nest of moss and grass, in which she gives birth to her young, three or four in number. The task of making the burrows and attending to the cubs appears to devolve chiefly upon the females. In the countries where the wild honey bees form their nests in the ground, they are often disturbed by the badger, who, having a decided taste for sweets, plunders their stores without ceremony. A Scotch naturalist says that the badger digs up the nests of the wasp and wild bee, and devours the larvæ or maggots

which they contain. It eats also the fallen beech-nuts and the roots of various plants. The badger possesses great strength, which, together with the toughness and looseness of its skin, enables it to offer considerable resistance when attacked. It defends itself with much agility, biting its assailant very severely, and frequently holding him fast between its teeth. It is killed with difficulty, except by a blow on the snout, a part where most animals are very sensible to injury. Hunting the badger is only performed by moonlight. In this sport the hunters are obliged to oppose art to cunning, and obtain by stratagem what they cannot effect by strength. At a late hour in the evening, when the badger is supposed to have left his kennel in search of food, some of the party proceed to place a sack at length within the burrow, so constructed that the mouth of the sack directly corresponds with the mouth of the earth, and is secured in that position by a willow hoop. This part of the business being completed, the parties withdrawn, and the signal whistle given, their distant companions lay on the dogs, either hounds, terriers, or lurchers, encouraging them through the neighbouring woods, coppices, and hedge-rows, which the badgers abroad no sooner find than, being alarmed, and well knowing their inability to continue a warfare so much out of their element, instantly make to the earth for shelter, where, oppressed with fear, they rush into certain destruction by entering the sack, being entangled in which they are soon secured by those who are fixed near the spot for that purpose. If the badger escape by the ill-construction or accidental falling of the sack, and safely enter the earth, digging him out is not only a very laborious but very precarious attempt, for the

badger will be generally found to have made his retreat before he can be reached, to render which the more easy he usually constructs his kennel among the roots of some old pollard, or underneath some hollow tree, that his assailants are often compelled, after tiring themselves by digging fifteen or twenty feet, to relinquish the pursuit. Badger baiting is a different sport, and of a lower description. It consists in attacking the animal at a distance from his burrow, generally with well-bred terriers. The badger is so rapid in his motions that the dogs are often desperately wounded, and compelled to give up the contest. The looseness and thickness of his skin are admirably contrived for his advantage.

These sports have given rise to a very expressive proverb of "Badgering a man with a request for payment of debts," &c.

The polecat or fitch inhabits the temperate parts of Europe, its range extending from Italy to Poland. In Britain, France, and many other countries, it is very common. From the nose to the extremity of the body its length is nearly eighteen inches, or, including the tail, one foot eleven inches. The edges of both jaws are white; the ears are short, semicircular, and tipped with white; the feet are short, toes long and separated to the very origin, the claws are sharp and hooked, white underneath and brown above; the head and legs are entirely of a dark chocolate, approaching to white. The hairs on the sides of the body are of a blackish brown colour, but yellowish about the middle and base. The coat consists of two sorts of fur, the shorter of which is the more warm and downy, and the adult animal retains both throughout the year; but the young

have only one sort of fur, which is of a very uniform dark brown, close and woolly. It generally resides in woods, or thick coppices in the neighbourhood of farm-houses. In such places it burrows under ground, forming a shallow retreat from two to three yards in length, generally terminating in a round chamber, situated for better security among the roots of some tree. Some, however, instead of forming a subterranean retreat, content themselves with a lodging under hayricks. During the daytime they usually remain in close concealment, but at night they sally forth in search of prey. The fitch is very nimble and active in its movements, running very fast, and accelerating its progress with a succession of leaps, arching its back each time it is about to spring from the ground. It also creeps up walls with great facility. In walking, the belly seems to touch the ground, owing to the shortness of its legs. Being a pursuing animal instead of pursued, it has its external organs for conveying impressions to the senses placed as favourably as possible. Its external auditory tube, Dr. Farrar observes, "is similar in length and diameter to the hare's, placed at an angle of forty-five degrees, but pointing from behind, in a direction downwards and forwards; in fact, the very opposite to its position in the hare. From this tube being placed very forwards, we should naturally conclude that this animal's sense of hearing is much less acute from behind than before, and this supposition is strongly supported by the following circumstance: —A farmer in my neighbourhood had his poultry disturbed on several successive nights, and one day he discovered near his residence a couple of fitches gamboling in a very frolicsome manner; approaching them cautiously from behind, he was enabled to come

within a very few yards of them. He levelled his loaded gun, but it missed fire. This occurred five or six times without a single spark being elicited from his flint, and notwithstanding all this hammering in their rear, the animals were never the least alarmed. At last, however, he was successful in obtaining one of them, but the other made its escape. On my examining the skull of the one he had shot, I was satisfied that though the fitch may hear sounds behind it, yet they are only heard imperfectly; otherwise, indeed, it must have taken the alarm at the many attempts to fire the gun. It preys upon various species of birds and reptiles; it commits great destruction upon hares and rabbits; and with that thirst for blood which is natural to all the weasel kind, it kills much more than it can devour. Goldsmith says that he has seen taken out of the burrow twenty dead rabbits at a time, and which it had destroyed by a wound hardly perceptible. A writer residing in Selkirkshire says he has indubitable evidence of a single fitch killing fifteen turkeys in one night. Pheasants, partridges, and pigeons are equally liable to its attacks. The reptiles which he preys upon are frogs and toads. The Selkirkshire naturalist before quoted says, "That in the month of June he noticed a narrow track leading from the long grass of a meadow towards the banks of the river Ettrick, and which track he concluded was the morning track of a fitch; having traced it to the termination in a hole in the ground, he procured a spade and dug out five young fitches, nearly half-grown, sleek, clean, and well fed, and really pretty, innocent-looking things. They were comfortably reposed in dry withered grass. From an apartment or larder at the side of them, he poked out and counted forty large frogs and toads, all of which possessed

enough life, and only enough, to sprawl their limbs out a little. On examining them he found that they had all been dexterously bitten through the brains; no other animals were found in its larder."

Berwick says that a fitch was repeatedly seen to resort to the banks of a river to catch eels, and that eleven were found in its retreat. The female makes her nest either in a rabbit burrow, a hole in the rock, or amongst a heap of stones grown over with grass or shrubs situated in some retired spot, though often in the vicinity of farms; she has from three to six young ones in a litter. As the young have been found in the nests in May and June, it is not altogether improbable that the fitch has two or more litters in a year. In winter the fitch, which cannot stand excessive cold or heat, leaves its abode in the woods, and betakes itself to barns, hay-lofts, &c., remaining hidden about them during the day, only leaving them at night, when it makes its attack in the hen roosts or in the dairy. It is impossible to thoroughly tame this animal."

The pine marten is so called because it is generally found in those localities where the pine trees abound, and is in the habit of climbing pines in search of prey. It is a shy and wary animal, withdrawing itself as far as possible from the sight of man; and although rather a dangerous and fierce antagonist when brought to bay, is naturally of a timid disposition, and avoids collision with its enemies. It delights in trees and traverses the trunks and branches with astonishing activity, and being enabled by its rapid and silent movements to steal unnoticed on many an unfortunate bird, and seize it in its deadly gripe before the startled victim can take to

flight. It is a sad robber of nests, rifling them of eggs and young, and not unfrequently adding the parent birds to its list of victims. Even the active and wary squirrel sometimes yields up its life to this agile and stealthy foe; for in a hole which had been made the head-quarters of a marten were found several of the bushy tails which are such predominant decorations of the squirrel's person. That the squirrels had been captured and eaten by a marten is placed beyond doubt by the fact, that the dead body of the destroyer was discovered within the hole, itself having fallen a victim to the venomous bite of a viper: there had evidently been a combat between the reptile and marten, both having succumbed to the deadly weapon of their adversary. It is probable that the viper was an intruder on the marten, and that the latter animal had, after receiving the fatal wound, retained sufficient strength to inflict such injuries upon its antagonist as to deprive it of the power of escape, and ultimately to cause its death. The damage which a pair of martens and their young will inflict upon a poultry-yard is almost incredible. If they can get into a fowl-house, they will destroy a whole brood of chickens, suck the eggs, and destroy the parents. To give an example of these little vermin, Mr. W. Thompson relates: "A farmer in Ireland who had possessed twenty one lambs, found one morning that fourteen of them had been killed by some destructive animal, and none of the flesh had been eaten, but had contented themselves with sucking the blood; on the following night the remaining seven were treated in a similar manner, and the destroyers, a pair of martens, were seen in the morning taking their departure from the scene of their sanguinary exploits; they were traced

to a magpie's nest in Tollymore Park." This is a favourite abode of this animal, because its arched covering and small entrance affords great security. The fur of the pine marten is very valuable, especially if the animal be killed in the winter: a gamekeeper of mine shot and trapped two at this season. I had the furs dressed at a furrier's, and they made a handsome trimming to a cloth pelisse belonging to my lady. It is esteemed little inferior to the sable. A gamekeeper can generally get half a guinea for the skin if it is trapped during the winter. It is thought not to be so prolific an animal as the beech marten, seldom producing above three or four at a birth.

The beech marten may be distinguished from the pine marten by the white tint of the fur on its throat and upper portion of its breast. A slight yellow tinge is sometimes observed on its throat. This animal is also known by the name of stone marten; in Germany, stein marten. In its destructive habits and thirst for blood it resembles the animal just described, and has earned for itself the title of domestic, which was applied to it by Gesner, as it frequents the vicinity of houses, and conceals itself in the barns and outhouses for the purpose of gaining access to the poultry. The marten, when taken young, may be made tame; so much so, that Lady ——'s coachman had one so thoroughly domesticated that it sat with him on the box of the carriage. One of these was procured when young by a shoemaker, and remained with him until it reached maturity. It then escaped from its adopted home, and commenced a series of depredations among the fowls kept by the neighbours, returning every night and con-

cealing itself in the house: its depredations became at last so annoying that there was a general outcry that it should be killed, which sentence was immediately put into execution. The marten is a good swimmer, as well as an excellent leaper and climber, and has been often seen to swim across a tolerably wide river, when it has been hard pressed in the chase. It is free from all offensive smell.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE


00044914



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 13 February, 2016